Death realm

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t Winter-Damon

S. Darmbrook Colson

Reynolds





Deathrealm

		#19	

FALL, 1993

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Rest in Peace: Buford G. Pigg, b. 1992, d. 1993. "He was such a young pig."

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William Trotter, artist Charles S. Hill, and ye Editor, zombie-hunting in the mountains of Virginia. Many corpses were bashed or blasted, and the wildlife will never be the same.

magazine of horror/dark fantasy, both in content and presentation, and I think we are well on the way. With this issue, we introduce In-

side Horror, a page of current events and writer-related news which we hope will help promote both authors and their products. As most of you reading this magazine know, the publishing business--especially for genre-writers-is a tough one, and contrary to what many casual readers might assume most of the names you see on book covers in your local Waldenbooks do not belong to wealthy, glamorous individuals who cruise the Riviera and knock out a best-seller every other weekend. Writers work, and in general are not terribly well paid for their long hours and endless devotion to their craft. A minority of published writers are actually able to support themselves solely by producing novels or short stories, and those who do usually live modestly and unpretentiously. New writers find it extremely difficult to "make it" in the business, for a business it is, and sadly, often cutthroat. Many might be surprised at the degree to which the major publishers expect their writers to take part in the mar-

Editorial ReMarks By Stephen Mark Rainey

keting and selling of their own books; there's a lot more to writing than just

writing. So, at DEATHREALM, we

trust that even the small amount of

publicity we can offer will be of benefit to those who have taken on the arduous task of entering the embattled

One of these courageous individu-

publishing arena.

make DEATHREALM the premiere

als, William R. Trotter, pictured above on a recent zombie hunt, will be seeing the paperback release of his first novel, WINTER FIRE, the hardback version of which was reviewed in the last DEATHREALM, in January of 1994. While not actually a horror novel, WINTER FIRE contains a dark, brooding atmosphere with a streak of fantasy embedded deeply at its core. If you haven't read this one, by all means seek it out upon its release. Mr. Deathrealm could not recommend it more highly. Look for another of Mr. Trotter's excellent Lovecraftian horror tales in next issue.

Whether you've been a DEATH-REALM devotee for many years, or are just now happening upon us. I hope you will find this issue a dark delight, and will support us with your continued business. Please, let us know what you think!

Wak hair

Stephen Mark Rainey Editor

news that young Buford G. Pigg, editor extraordinaire. passed away of an unknown malady on Friday, July 17, 1993. A young guinea pig he was, less than a year old and up until the last days, bursting with healthy hostility. He had achieved real proficiency as a manuscript shredder, mais alas, Buford perhaps et one too many vile tales. He was buried in the pig boneyard out back, next to Basil and Gus, his predecessors. He will be sorely missed

IRST, I MUST report the sad

Abbott the cat will probably assume Buford's duties, although grudgingly. You know how cats get.

Tal and I wish to thank everyone who has given us their support as our partnership continues. DEATHREALM #18 has been generally welcomed with open arms--it sold out, as a matter of fact--for which we are most grateful. As we somewhat expected, a number of production problems arose that resulted in a few graphic glitches last time, but we have worked very hard to try and correct them this issue. Some still linger, and have proven difficult to address, but I think that, with each issue, the magazine will become more and more polished. We are looking to

INSIDE HORROR

MASSIE ON THE MOVE

ELIZABETH MASSIE, AUTHOR of SINEATER (Pan. 1932), has signed on with a new agent. Peter Rubie of Lori Perkins Associates. SINEATER is now being marketed as a suspense/ thriller and both Rubie and Massie anticipate finding an American publisher in the near future. SINEATER recently won the Horror Writer's Association Bram Stoker Award for 1992 Superior Achievement, First Novel, which should make SINEATER, an even more attractive find for the lucky publisher.



BRITE NEWS FOR THE FRENCH QUARTER

POPPY Z. BRITE, author of LOST SOULS (Dell/Abyss, Hardcover, 1992) recently moved from the academic setting of Athens, GA to the wild and woolly French Quarter of New Orleans where she is working on her first love--short stories--before beginning her third novel.

Poppy will be taking part in a five-city reading and signing tour with fellow Abyss author **Melanie Tem** to promote **LOST SOULS**, which will be out in paperback in October 1993, and her second novel, **DRAWING BLOOD**, which is due out in November, 1993.

Living in the French Quarter, which is nothing but wall-to-wall cute gay boys, is frustrating but delectable for a freak such as herself who, she says, is actually a gay man who happens to have been born in a female body.

LOST SOULS has been sold in Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands and the UK, and was a Book-of-the-Month Club alternate. In addition to being nominated for the HWA Stoker Award for Superior Achievement, First Novel, it was also nominated for a Lambda Award for outstanding gay fiction.

FAST MEETS WEST

STANISLAUS TAL, OF Tal Publications, recently hosted Igor Tolokonnikov of the Baziat Literary Agency, Volgograd, Russia. It wasn't all business. Stan and his wife, Donna, took Igor to the Barnes Exhibit in the East Wing of the National Gallery of Art. Stan and Igor found that they shared the same "favorite" artist: Claude Monat.

During their visit, they concluded negotiations for forming a joint venture, to be registered in Volgograd, Russia, called East-West Bizarre, Ltd., for the purpose of marketing western literature in Russia, Eastern Europe and China. East-West Bizarre, Ltd. will be securing the right to agent the foreign rights to novels and collections in the following categories: Horror, Dark Fantasy, Science Fiction, Suspense, Mystery, Detective and Men's Adventure. Within the next vear or so, West-West Bizarre. Ltd. hopes to break into non-traditional Eastern European markets and main-

Queries only to Stan Tal, PO Box 1837, Leesburg, VA 22075.

THE BROTHERS THOMAS

JEFFREY AND SCOTT Thomas are more than just brothers. They're both successful short fiction writers, and both have very different but equally frightening tales of horror in this issue of DEATHREALM. Both Jeffrey and Scott live in Westborough, MA. Their talent comes naturally, their father, Robert Thomas, is renowned there as the town's poet laureate.



The Brothers Thomas: Jeffrey (I) and Scott (r).

PUBLISHER INTRODUCES NEW EROTIC LINE

MASQUERADE BOOKS OF New York, NY will be introducing a new Erotic Horror line sometime in early 1994. One of the first books in this line will be a collection of erotic horror, UNNATURAL ACTS AND OTHER STORIES by Lucy Taylor. This collection is a spin-off of the Tal chapbook UNNATURAL ACTS. However, only one story from the chapbook will appear in the collection, which will be a mixture of about half reprints and half new material, including the all new 15,000 word title story, Unnatural Acts.



Fred Chappell Greensboro, NC

New DEATHREALM in, and a classy, slick-looking job it is, too. Liked best the tales by Webb and Wilson and the features. Andrea Locke's reviews always very sensible as well as sweetly charitable where necessary. Nice column by Karl, more power to JD sez I.

All the best to DEATHREALM.

Sean Doolittle Lincoln, NE

Just got #18 in the mail, and it looks just fabulous. I think the additions of columns from Karl Wagner and D. F. Lewis are good ones (Wagner's had me chuckling out loud in public, and you know how people chuckling in public are generally received). The art looks great, as always, and I'm looking forward to getting to the fiction.

Sylvester Stansfield Ithaca, NY

Having just finished the last of DEATHREALM #18, I have good reason to look forward to the remainder of my recently-ordered year's subscription. Each of the tales present managed in the end to rise above what struck me at first as somewhat less than inspired prose, so that, though I found myself generally disappointed with the writing through midway of each (excepting Rex Miller and Jessica Horsting's collaboration, which was nothing short of professional from page one), I was left with a good impression overall.

On the Edge of the Pit, for instance, is a little gem, and far more horrific than might at first appear to be the case; though it makes you smile, that smile soon vanishes when you suddenly cross your eyes in awareness of your own nose.

You really should pass, however, in future, if offered any further Hemingwayesque posturing from Karl Edward Wagner in his *New From Carcosa* column. I counted a dozen sophomoric references to alcohol, all told, and couldn't help but think such an outstanding author should know better; I don't know the average age of a DEATHREALM subscript, but the older ones won't be impressed, and the younger ones might be influenced. Better they should stuff their dead little brother up a chimney in imitation of the fiction.

By the way, when I unwrapped my copy and saw Augie Wiedemann's tentacled elephantine monstrosity on the

cover, I thought it more interesting than terrifying; but I got a real fright when I saw the picture of the thing on the editorial page. I could hardly decide whether it was a painting or...say, that wasn't a Richard Upton Pickman, was ir?

((No, it was...my god...a photograph from life!--Ye Ed))

N. Unaussprechlichen Kultist Plateau of Leng

It is with great pleasure that I note the return of DEATHREALM. You have proven the wisdom of Alhazred's maxim "It ain't dead till the ghouls get fat." (approximate translation.)

Since you have made adequate amends for your former slander re, the Starry Wisdom Sect by your printing of my missive in issue #16, I am able to admit that your magazine would be sorely missed by certain debased, mongrel and retrograde intellects of the sort comprising our congregation.

Still, I must insist that you exercise editorial restraint of the strictest measure to avoid the revelation of certain... practices...of which the general population could not and should not be aware.

Ex unque leonum, were the masses to realize that the puerile post-marriage ritual dance known as the "Hokey-Pokey" is in actuality a derivative of the Tcho-Tcho curse sending which will visit upon the newlyweds the treble torments of crabgrass, weight gain and mediocre credit rating the consequences to the purveyors of rental halls and \$3.00 per plate buffets would be dire indeed.

Face it, if your readers want in-depth knowledge of the abhorrent entities that mindlessly pipe and babble in the center of swirling chaos, they can tune in C-SPAN.

In closing, may I mention the latest release from StarWisCo Press: The HPL Stylebook--subtilted Yes, I Know That My Florid and Archaic Vocabulary is Anathema to Editorial Sensibilities But That is the Way They Wrote in 17th Century England So I Do Not Give a Suil.

The signed, numbered, lettered, hand-corrected, authorillustrated, limited edition printed on burial-quality linen and bound in shoggoth hide is available to collectors.

> Jeffrey Thomas Westborough, MA

I have received the new, reborn DEATHREALM. Wow, as always. The addition of color to your excellent cover is cool. The type is wonderful, and easy to read, though I do miss the unbeatable phototypesetting a bit. Still, I'm not complaining; the loss is extremely stible, and I mention it only cuz I work for a print shop. DEATHREALM is still as professional-looking, slick and beautiful as one could hope for in a magazine, small press or pro (which you seem to be on the verge of). I do have one complaint, though I'm sure there's a practical reason for it. I always enjoy the art on the inside of the covers, and finding those pages blank was a disappointment. The only thing that wasn't fully professional-looking. But I know there is some good reason

behind it, as I say.

Enjoyed the new columns by Lewis and, particularly, Wagner. The art throughout is, as always, unsurpassed. Thus far I've read Michael Dillon's enjoyable short-short, plus the superb Numhed by James Robert Smith. This one seemed influenced by Barker's Candynan, but that might be me judging the author because he had written Hellraiser comics. It was an extremely well-written, utterly depressing story with a tremendous eye for disturbing and bleak detail. Seems like he was painting a microcosmic portrait of America today: half shut down, the functioning half in need of paint, and everyone on the edge of desperation, insanity and violence. Bravo. One of the best stories I've read in the small press.

Again, congratulations.

Donald Robers Kenosha, WI

I recently received DEATHREALM #18 and want to add to the chorus of congratulations upon the return of your great magazine. The stories and artwork were typically first-rate and what changes there were add to the magazine's appeal. The more colorful cover will certainly help in the "over the counter" market, and the snaring of Karl Edward Wagner as a columnist is a real ccup. It would seem that in the finest tradition of the genre, DEATHREALM has risen from the grave badder and better than ever.

My sincere thanks to you, Peggy, Tal, and the others who work to make DEATHREALM the premiere dark fantasy magazine being published. Your efforts are appreciated!

> D. F. Lewis Surrey, England

Received DEATHREALM #18. Everything as a whole looks great. Well, I knew it would. The personality of DEATHREALM prevails, and we must also thank Tal for helping it prevail.

I loved the cover! Attacked me right out of the envelope. A delight! I'm not sure all the fiction's to my taste. Too cyberpunk (well, cyberpunk style, if not necessarily in subject matter-e.g., Miller & Horsting). I enjoyed the first part of Don Webb's All of Life's Questions, but the Russian stuff lost me. Harry Fassl's Numhed illo on page 48 was beautiful. Overall, a great magazine. No kidding.

Michael Thomas Dillon Methuen, MA

Augie Wiedemann's ecver on #18 looks great, as does all the interior art. The magazine and book reviews were very insightful. I could not agree more with Andrea's comments concerning WEIRD TALES. I have found many of their past issues, for the most part, nothing short of uninspired, and I

hope she is right about the magazine raising its standards above the bland routine that it generally seems to offer. The columns by Wagner and Lewis were also insightful, and I am looking forward to hearing what they will discuss in future issues.

As for the fiction, my favorite piece was Smith's Numhed. This is my first taste of his fiction, and I was quite impressed. Very disturbing stuff! I also liked Wilson's Lost Wisdom of Instinct and Webb's All of Life's Questions, though their lack of horrific content was somewhat disappointing for me. Miller and Horsting's tale also disappointed me, though on a different level. It was written well and the prison setting was interesting, but the conclusion just fell flat for me. I guess, because of its length, I expected more than the standard voodoo-turnabout ending. My least favorite piece was D'Ammassa's Passing Death, which had an interesting premise but no real resolution. He left too many important questions unanswered (unless I missed something in the two reads I gave it).

Don't get me wrong-I enjoyed all of the stories to varying degrees (except perhaps for *Passing Death*). I have no doubt this issue will be well-received.

Keith Minnion Philadelphia, PA

One correction for my bio in #18: true, I currently have an SF novel (The Beggar's Gate) being shopped around by George Scithers/Darrell Schweitzer at Owlswick Literary Agency, and I am in the midst of doing a final rewrite on a detective/horror novel called Up in the Boneyard, but neither have been sold. The implication in the bio, I think, is that they are published. Big difference, as I 'm sure you'll agree. I mean, anyone can "write a novel," getting the damn thing published is the bitch. Until they sell, I 'm still just an occasional short story writer and an "up-and-coming" horror illustrator.

Tim Walters Muskogee, OK

It is wonderful to see DEATHREALM's resurrection. Actually, the DEATHREALM hiatus was not excessive by small press standards. Several small press zines frequently experience a publication lapse longer than the gap separating your issues 17 and 18.

Numhed by James Robert Smith was a very graphic and effective tale, providing a succinct look at the dehumanization and humiliation suffered by society's "losers." Craig's desperation and desponsdency leads him to one of America's bourgeois temples of capitalism, the urban mall. His bizarre journey through the deserted bowels of a middle class mecca, and his ultimate realization, were chilling.

Continued on page 62

Season by Douglas Clegg

HE WIND HAD a taste to it, for Leona was hanging out the wash on the rope strung between the willow and the sapling, down by the river, with the smell of shad, dead on the water's surface from running, and the clean of soap powder and bleach; the Sack was strung up and bounced with each windblow; and Mama was boiling meat in back before the flies would be up to bother her; and it was a rough wind, a March wind even in late April, coming ahead of a storm. The river was high, threatening flooding if the storms kept up, which they were wont to do, but Theron had done all the clearing, and the chairs and table from the levee were already in the spring house, the old spring house that no longer flooded, and he was almost to the shed, now, because the horses were kicking at the stall. The sky was its own secret blue, unnatural, with blue clouds and blue winds and blue sun, all signalling a squall coming down from off-island. He could see the oyster boats rocking across the bay, two miles from the house, just like mosquito larvae wriggling, and he wondered how it was on Tangier, of that girl he met at Winter Festival--he was fourteen, and she was nearly seventeen, but he had seen it in her eyes, those flatland island dull eyes, a flicker of what could only have been fire when she had let him touch her the way Daddy touched Mama.

The horses, prophis sying storm, kicked the wood, and the shed trembled. Mama cried out at the noise, surprised, but Leona, in her earthly wisdom, just kept hanging sheets and shirts as if the impending storm mattered not one whit, for it would come and go quickly, a final rinse for the laundry. Theron kept buttoning his shirt; the screen door banged with the wind; the blue sky turned indigo, then gray, with flashes of lightning between. First drops of rain, sweet and cold.

He ran like a horse himself, back to the shed, for he loved the horses and could not bear their distress. The ground was damp, but not muddy, and he galloped across it barefoot in spite of the biting chill. He could feel the rain spitting at his back as he got there, to the door, which he drew back. The smells of the horses, the manure, the cats, too, for they roamed amongst the piles and hay for mice and snakes, strong but not unbearable.

His father was there, at the mast which centered the shed, around which the horses were knocking and frenzied. The mast had a great length of chain hanging from it, and the leather strops of discipline, too, wrapped about its middle. Carved notches marked the days of the season, from Winter Festival to May Day, the days when Daddy did his penance, the hours of his atonement for a sin long ago forgotten. His father wore no shirt; his chest was covered with kudzu hair which sprawled across his shoulders and connected to his belly like inflamed moss; tro seers were dirty, shit-stained; boots, too, with blood near the toes for they were tight and he would wear them all during the hurting season.

"You got Naomi upset," Theron said, not meaning to scold, but it was hard to avoid. Naomi was not yet a year, and needed gentleness; the old horse, her sire, Moses, was used to the season, the frantic pain that Daddy put himself through, but Naomi was barely more than a foal.

His father's eyes were not even upon him, but gazing

through him, beyond him, to some richer meaning, listening to the words, but decoding them. The man 's face was yellow jaundice, and the hunger showed in the sunken cheeks; the thin blond hair, cut short like a monk's Theron thought, was slick and shiny, the sweat, pearls of mania. "That's not good," his father said, "you take her out, then, take her out, bov."

Theron nodded, glad, and ran around the mast to grab Naomi's bit. He tugged at her, but her eves were still wild. Theron looked around the shed. "It's the chain, Daddy," he said, for he knew that a horse, unless tempered to a rope, would take fright at anything that resembled one; the silver chain swung lightly about the thick wood. On its end was a rusty hook, from one of the ovster trawlers that had dry-docked over in Tangier, and there was blood on it. He registered this, for a moment, wondering what his father did with the hook that drew blood from him. It was frightening, sometimes, the hurting season, at least to him; he was sure it frightened Mama, too, for she was moody during those months; Leona, older than Daddy or Mama, didn't seem to notice or care; and Milla, being so young, accepted it the way Theron had up until he'd become aware that it was only his Daddy who did it, that when he went to Tangier, nobody else had a mast or the chain and strops, nobody else had a Daddy that slept with the horses from February to May.

The boy brought the horse out of the shed, into the slapping rain; the smell of bleach and soap stronger, and he looked up to see the wash swimming in the wind, their stays holding tight to the rope; Naomi tugged away from him, but he kept his grip, watching for the horse's teeth. He spoke to her, calmly, and led her over to the spring house. It would be small for the horse, but she'd be safe and fairly dry, and the darkness of it would calm her. He tied her to the unturned patio chair, and wiped at her forelock and nose with the red bandanna the girl over at the Festival had given him, smoothing down the horse's mane, and withers, to settle her, The horse had the thick hair of the island horses--it was said that they could be traced back to the Spanish ships wrecking off the islands, and his father had told him that the harsh winters in the wild had developed the breed to the point of hardiness and hairiness. Something Theron had learned in school, too, a phrase, "survival of the fittest." That had been the island horses, for they swam every spring around the time of May Day from Tangier over to Chite Island, which was here. Here, beneath my feet. Centuries of horses coming to mate on Chite in the spring, and to swim back in October when winter came too harsh here first. Here. Chite was a small island, although the river that ran through it connected it through the wetlands to the Carolina Isthmus, so it had not been a real island since sometime long before Theron was born. Old Moses, he had been a Chiter, and his dam, a wild horse that had never been tamed on Tangier, had died and left the one foal, Naomi. Mine. Naomi had a bad fetlock, the back left, and she raised it a little, so he squatted down beside her and massaged it. The wind through the cracks in the old gray wood bit around his ears, but the whistling sound it made seemed to steady his horse. "Good girl," he said, and wrapped the bandanna around his neck the way the girl had. It smelled of horse, now, and perfume, and fish, as all things on Tangier smelled of fish.

Theron waited out the storm in the spring house, and when it was over, in just a few minutes, he led the horse out to the rock-pile road that spanned the wetlands to the west of the house, and took her at a canter.

THE HORSE SLOWED towards the middle of the rock-pile, for it became less smooth here, and there were small gaps in the rocks. The sky cleared, but the sun was still not up in the middle of it, but back in the east, over Tangier. A red-winged blackbird flew up and out from the mesh of vellow reeds and dive-bombed at Theron's hair. "Hev!" he shouted, "Didn't do nothin' to you!" He flapped his hands at the descending bird, and dug his heels into Naomi's side until she galloped some more. His butt was sore from the pounding, for he didn't have his seat yet, at least not with Naomi, for she was an erratic bounder, but he rose fell rose fell with her, his leg muscles feeling stronger, and he tried to pretend that he and the horse were one animal, just like his Daddy had taught him. The bird left him alone once he was out of its territory, and he guided Naomi down to some fresh water for a drink. He saw their reflection, the horse's long neck, its thick shaggy mane hanging down, and then his own face in the cold brown water--the red bandanna tied smartly just under his chin, and some whiskers on his upper lip. He smiled at himself; she had liked him, that older girl in Tangier, the pretty one. She was brown eyes just like everybody else on the islands, and brown hair, and freckles, Her hands were little brushes on his, for they scratched and tingled and smooth when she had slid them across his palms. "Lookit," she'd said, after she'd done it, and he had looked at his hands. At the palms of his hands, All red, the palms, like they were blushing and warm. "You got skin like water," she said, "see-through hands. I can see you through your skin, boy. Boy." She said boy like it was a dare, so he had kissed her behind the booth, where nobody could see them. He had known what the other boys did, the ones in school, even over in the Isthmus, for they bragged about tit touching and pussy stroking and diving and plunging and gushing. He had felt the electricity in his body, and in hers, and her lips were--gold warm hot sting bite taste smell wet mud-sensations had gone through him that words did not even come near, for it was his first kiss ever, and she had seen his excitement when she drew back from it. She had looked down at his trousers and said, "I guess that means you like me."

Embarrassed, he had dropped a hand in front of him, and clasped it with the other, "huh?"

"Rising like that. In your pants. It means a boy likes a girl. It's nature," she had said, the teacher of his flesh. She drew a line with her finger down his belly to his pants, and circled the knob that thrust forward from the denim. It grewet, a spot. She grinned. He leaned forward and kissed her again, but she pushed him away this time, and said, "nuh-uh." But it led him, this feeling, just like the boys had told him it would, it led him without a thought in the world to anything

else.

The horse leaned down, disturbing the water, and Theron's reflection whirled and broke in the water. She had liked him, that girl, that day. He had changed since then, he knew it

He was a man now, even if the others called him boy.

THE ROCK-PILE road ended at the Isthmus Highway, rising out of reeds and swamps and curly-down trees like an altar of the true religion. Theron wasn't supposed to take Naomi up on it, for even though few cars traveled it until summer, when the summer people from the cities came down, and when Daddy blocked the rock-pile road to keep them off his property, the highway could be dangerous, for an occasional truck roared through in nothing flat, and a girl's mother got hit a long time ago trying to push her daughter out of the way and to safety. But Theron, a man now, and cocky, rode Naomi up the brief, steep hill, batting back the sticks and dead vines that had not yet greened since the winter, and clopped up onto the pot-holed blacktop. Naomi was faster on the highway, riding down the center line, for it was completely flat, and where it dipped could be seen, and avoided, for several vards,

avoided, for several yards.

As he slowed her down, at a bend in the road, there was a car stuck in mud on the shoulder. Theron was not big on cars, not like the others boys, but this one was pretty and sporty, a two-seater. A man stood beside it, kicking the bumper and cursing to high heaven. He was a lot younger than Daddy, but maybe only Mama's sage. He wore a tan suit, and had rolled his slacks up almost to his knees, which were black with mud. He was soaked head to toe, caught, no doubt in the storm. His eyeglasses were fogged in exertion and frustration. Cars were like that, which is why Theron's family didn't own one.

Theron dismounted, and led Naomi up to the man. "Mister, 'scuse me, but what kind of car is that?"

The man looked at Theron as if he could not hear. Almost like his father in the shed. Then, he said, "it's a Miata. Mazda, kid. Right now it's a shitkicker."

"Pretty nice. Never seen one before," Theron nodded.

"You must be the local genius," the man said, and then grinned, "sorry, but you ever get so pissed off at something you can't see straight, kid?"

"I guess."

"So, kid, you live nearby? You got a phone or something?"

"Yeah, only we don't let strangers use it."

"Okay. Anybody else around here? A drugstore?"

Theron laughed, and covered his mouth to keep from making the man feel too bad. "Sorry-sorry-don't mean to laugh. Don't mean to. But you're twenty five miles from town center." He pointed toward the direction that the man must've already come.

"That piss-hole? Christ, kid, that's a town? I thought it was a mosquito breeding ground. Nothing the other way?

The man seemed to be taking in the house

and the river. "Are you people witches or some-

sir," his pride a little hurt by such an assump-

Theron straightened up and grunted, "nah-

thing?" he asked.

tion, "we're Baptists."

You sure?"

Naomi whinnied, and Theron patted her nose. "She's shy. Just shy of biting, sometimes, I think," Then he tugged at the bandanna around his neck, self-consciously. There was something about this man he didn't feel comfortable about. "You're not from around here."

The man shook his head. "No, kid, I'm a damn Yankee. Make that a goddamned Yankee, But don't hold it against me." The man said his name was Evan, and was from Connecticut, and that he wrote magazine articles and was supposed to meet his wife up in Myrtle Beach, but he was doing some kind of article on Lost ByWays of the South.

"You write," Theron said, smiling, "that's wild. Wild. Me, I barely read. I watch t.v. Anything you write ever get on t.v.?"

Evan shook his head, "yeah, I once wrote for the t.v. news, CBS, "

"I watch that. Dan Rather. My Daddy thinks he's from another parish, if you know what I mean, but Daddy thinks anybody on t.v. is."

"Well, kid, I don t know about that, but I know I hated it. I hate this. What a way to make a living, huh?"

Theronshrugged, "survival of the fittest. I guess."

The wind, which had died, picked up again, rattling the dead reeds, shagging at the budding trees, dispersing the netals of those that had blossomed early. He could smell honeysuckle already, up here on the Isthmus, and it wasn't even May. The man had

a kind look to him, a wrinkled-brow honesty, and Daddy had always told him that when someone needed help, there was only one thing to do. "Look, Mister," Theron said after watching the man pace his car, "if you don't mind walking down there," he pointed down the gully, over the wetlands, to the stand of trees that separated Chite from the mainland. "it's about two miles. I'd let you ride her, but she's shy. My Daddy's got a phone, only I got to warn you about one thing.

Evan said, "what's that, kid?"

"We keep to ourselves most of the time. I go to school up in Isthmus, but we don't really mix. My baby sister Milla, she never even seen a mainlander."

The man named Evan seemed to grasp this immediately. "Let's go."

EVAN GOT A camera and a tape recorder out of the back of his car, and strung both of them around his neck like ties. His shoes were brown and would be uncomfortable for the trip--Theron smiled inside himself when he thought of

crossing the land on the other side of the rock-pile road, where the mud would surely suck him to his ankles if he wasn't careful. Evan asked, as they descended from the highway, down to the road between the wetlands, "are there snakes down here?"

"Too cold still. There'll be plenty by June. I once saw a man from Tangier bite the head off a cottonmouth. You ever see that? He just chomped, and spitted it out like it was tobacco." Theron rode Naomi, but walked her slow so the man could keep up with them. He wasn't sure how Daddy or Mama, or even Leona for that matter, would take having a stranger over; Daddy was normally friendly with outlanders, but this was the hurting season, and it might be embarrassing for someone to walk right into the middle of that. Theron assumed that other fathers had their own hurting seasons, although he'd been too awkward to ask any of the boys over in the high school, both because they always seemed smarter than him, and because he was already teased enough as it was for being so different.

The sun was just past noon when they reached sight of the house, and the wind had pretty much died. The sky was white with cloud streaks, and the earth was damp, the moss that hung from the trees sparkled with heaven's spit, as Mama called rain when she was feeling poetic. Naomi tried to pick up speed, for the shed was close by, but he kept her slow

out of courtesy to the stranger. "How you doin'?" he asked

Evan. Evan wagged his head around, and said, "hey, kid, can I get a picture? You and the horse and the house and that thing--what is that? Some kind

of bag?" Theron looked in the direction where Evan indicated,

as the man unscrewed his camera's lens cap. Dangling from the willow, with the wash, was the Luck Sack. "It's for good luck," Theron said, "it keeps away hurricanes and floods in spring."

"How's it work?"

"So far, so good," He posed for a picture, sitting up proudly on his horse, keeping his chin back so the man could get a clear shot of the red bandanna that girl in Tangier had given him. Theron wished he had a hat--his father had a hat, and now that Theron had crossed the border between boyhood and mandom, he would've liked something brown with a broad brim to keep the sun out of his eyes, to make him feel like a horseman.

"So," Evan said, snapping several pictures, "you have other good luck charms?"

Theron struck pose after pose, attempting a masculine look for this one, a shy look, a rugged, tough pose, "we're not much into good luck. It's what we call tradition. Say, how much film you got in there?"

"Lotse" snap -- snap -- snap. "What's in that sack, anyway?"

"One of the cats. We got seven. Kittens on the way," Theron said, "I love kittens, but cat's I ain't so fond of. You gonna put my pictures in a magazine or something?"

"Maybe," Evan said, lowering the camera. He let the camera swing around his neck. He reached beneath his glasses and rubbed his eyes. His face glowed with sweat-the two miles had been hard on him, because he was a Yankee. The man seemed to be taking in the house and the river, maybe even the bay if his eyesight was any good with those thick glasses. "Are you people witches or something?"

Theron straightened up and grunted, "nahsir," his pride a little hurt by such an assumption, "we're Baptists."

"RONNY, HONEY," LEONA said, her eyes lowering, not even looking at the stranger; she kept the screen door shut, and her massive form blocked the way. "I don't think you should be bringing people home right now."

"This's Evan. He's a Yankee," Theron said, "he needs to use the phone."

Leona looked at Evan's shoes. Theron saw the squiggle vein come out on her forehead, like when she was tense over cleaning. "Mister, our phone's out of order," she said it lightly, delicately, sweetly. Then she looked him in the eve.

Evan blinked. "That's okay," he said, patting Theron on the shoulder

Leona arched her evebrows, and stared at the small tape recorder and camera around his neck. "You a traveling pawn shop, mister?" "Nah'm," Theron

butted in, "he writes for magazines. He's a famous writer, Leo, he used to write for Dan Rather."

"Not really," Evan said.

"I'm sorry, sir, but you can't come in the house. The little girl's sick, and like I said, the phone's not working. We had a big storm this morning. Always knocks out the power lines and such." She kept her hands pressed against the screen door as if the man would suddenly bolt for it. And then, to Theron, "now, Ronny, why'd you bring this nice man all the way out here when you knew the line was down?"

Theron said, " 'Cause I thought it'd be up by now, " turning to look up at Evan who kept staring at Leona, "it's usually up in a hour or two," and, as if this were a brilliant idea, he clapped his hands, "I know, Evan, you can stay and have some sandwich and pie, and then maybe the phone 'll be up."

A groan from the shed out back, and Evan and Theron

both glanced that way. It was Daddy with his hurting, Leona groaned, as much to cover up the other noise as anything, and she clutched her stomach. "I tell you, Mister, what little Milla's got, we all seem to be coming down with. You'd be wise to get on back up to Isthmus."

"Some kind of flu," Evan said.

"That's right. That one that's been going around," she nodded, looking pained.

Evan grinned, as if this were a game. "Had my flu shots, ma'am. And anyway, even if I hadn't, I'll survive it."

Leona lost all semblance of pretend kindness. "Just get off this property right now, and Ronny, you take him back up to the highway." She stepped back into the gray hallway and shut the big door on both of them.

"She always this sweet?"

Theron shook his head. "I don't know what's wrong

with her today. She's almost a hundred but all age done for her is make her ornery." He went and tied Naomi around the sapling.

had your marching orders," Evan said, following him.

"I don't listen to Leona. She's just the hired help. You take orders from servants. my daddy says, and you end up a shit frog. We got them in the spring house. You ever see a shit frog? They go from the stable to the river, but they still can't get it

"I thought you

off them." Theron grabbed the laundry rope with both hands and clung to it, letting his knees go slack. "You gonna take more pictures?"

"I don't know," Evan said, but he lifted his camera again, snapped some more of the boy, and then of the river. and the house, and the tire swing, and the Lucky Sack hanging on the willow. He looked all around, through his camera, as if trying to see something else worth photographing, when he seemed to freeze. He lowered the camera, and turned to face Theron

Theron shivered a little bit, because of the man's look, all cold and even angry, maybe.

"Where are the lines?" he asked.

"Huh?"

"Kid, if you got a phone, where's the pole? Where're the lines? If the line's down, you got to have a line in the first place, kid, what kind of game is this?"

Theron didn't have an answer, not yet anyway. He said,

"dang."

From the shed, a series of shouts, cuss words as strong as Theron had ever heard from the boys at Isthmus.

The stranger named Evan turned around at the sound, took in the whole landscape, the house, the river, the shed, the springhouse, the laundry rope, the bay, the boats, the way the grass was new and green and damp. He walked over to the Lucky Sack, and Theron shouted. "Mister! Evan! Hev!"

But the man had already opened the sack, his face turning white, and he looked at Theron, his eyes all squinching up, and Daddy began screaming at the top of his lungs from the shed, and Old Moses, the horse, started thumping at the wood.

"You sick fucks," Evan said, weeping, "you sick fucks, you said it was a cat, you sick..." But the sobbing took him over racking his body the convilsions of sadness shaking him.

over, racking his body, the convulsions of sadness shaking him.

Theron blurted, "it's bad luck to look in the Sack, mister."

"Who is it, you sick fuck, who is this?"

Theron tugged at the red bandanna around his neck. "It's private."

"Listen, you," Evan raised both fists and brought them down on the boy, knocking him to the ground.

Theron was angry, and knew he shouldn't, but told him anyway because he hated keeping the secret, "it's the first girl I ever kissed. It's the part of her that's sacred. It's the part that made me a man!"

But then Mama was there, behind the man, and hit him with the back of the hoe, just on his skull, and the glasses flew off first, and then his hands wriggled like nighterawlers, and he erumpled to the ground.

MILLA HELD ON tight to Mama's skirt, her brown eyes wide, her hair a tangly weedy mess. She looked like an unmade bed of a baby sister; when Theron got up from the ground, he went and lifted her up. "It's okay, it's just fine, and she looked scared other around. She was only three, and she looked scared. Theron loved her so much, his sister. He had prayed for a brother when the birthing woman was in their house, but when he had seen Milla nit he shed, laying there in his mother's arms, while the birthing mother screamed as Daddy tied her to the mast, he knew that he would love that little girl until the day he died, and protect her from all harm.

Mama said, in her tired way, "Ronny why'd you bring him down here?"

Theron kissed his sister on the cheek, and looked up to his mother. He was always frightened of his mother's rages, for they, like the hurting season, came in the spring, and lasted until mid-summer. "1-1 don't know."

"That ain't good enough. And don't lie to me, or you shall eat the dust of the earth all your days and travel on your bells."

"I--I guess. I guess because I wanted Daddy to stop hurting for awhile. I want us all to stop hurting for awhile, Mama," and then he found himself crying, just like the man named Evan had been, because he didn't like the hurting season, and he didn't completely understand the reason for it

For a moment, he saw the temper begin to flare in his mother's eyes, and then she softened. She bent down, dropping the hoe at her side, and gathered him up in her arms, him and Milla both, hugged tight to her bosom. "Oh, my little boy, you may be a man now, but you will always, always be my little boy." She threatened to weep, too, and Theron figured they'd be the soggiest mess of human in the county, but Mama held back. Daddy was silent in the shed, no doubt exhausted.

Theron thought it might be the right time to ask the question he'd had on his mind since he first discovered about the hurting season. "Why, Mama?"

"Ronny?"

"Why does it have to be us?"

"You mean about the season?"

"Not just the season," he said, drying his tears, "but us here, and them," he looked across the bay to Tangier, "over there. We don't mix."

His mother reached over to his forehead, and traced her finger along the brand that had been put there, a simple x. He felt her nail gently trace the lines of the letter. "It's our mark," she said, "from the beginning of creation. Passed through the fathers to the sons."

Theron looked at Milla, "what about the daughters?"
"Uh-huh, that, too, but no birthing, no creation. Our
womb must not bear fruit. You remember the scripture."

He did: And your seed shall not pollute your womankind, but shall be passed through the women of the land to bring your sons and daughters into lesser sin. And of your daughter, the fruit of her womb shall be sewn shut, and neither man nor beast may enter therein. Behold, you and your seed shall sin that the world may be saved. But when he told the lines to one of the boys in Isthmus, the boy laughted and said he knew the Bible by heart and that wasn't in it. But in the hide-covered Bible that Leona kept above the bread-box, it was right there, in Genesis.

The man on the ground began to stir, his hands witching.

"I'm gonna take him to the shed," Theron said, pulling away from the warmth of his mother's arms.

THE MAN WAS heavy.

Dragging him through the mud was made more difficult because of the way he was moving, for the legs now kicked a bit, and the man was groaning, but the blood had stopped from the wound on the top of his skull. Theron felt muscles in his arms and legs begin to plump with this effort; he was sore from riding, too, which didn't help, and when he was halfway to the shed, he wished he'd been smart enough to have just thrown the man over Naomi and get him to the shed that way. He smelled the stewpot, for Mama let it cook all day long, and then when the men, meaning him and Daddy, were hungry, they could just ladle out a hefty portion into the

bowl themselves, for men were too busy with work to sit down at table until supper time. When he got to the shed, Evan looked up at him, although the glasses had fallen somewhere along the way. Theron could tell by the way he was squinting that he wasn't seeing much right in front of his face.

"It's okay, mister," the boy said, "don't worry."

Evan, scrunching up his face, not quite sure where he was, coughed up some spit, which dribbled down the side of his chin. "Uh-awh," was the noise he made.

Theron rapped on the shed door, not wanting to let go of the man's shoulder with his other hand. "Daddy!" he called, "open up. Daddy!"

The door opened inward, and his father seemed to know what to do. He bent down on one knee, cradling Evan's face between his hands. His father's face was slick with greasy sweat, and there was blood around his eyes where he'd driven the fish-hooks beneath the lids. He brought his face close to Evan's, and kissed the sputtering man on the lips.

Theron knew then that he had done the right thing, for it build mean that spring would come fast now, and that Daddy didn't have to suffer through the hurting season alone. While he kissed the man, Daddy brought the oyster boat hook with its length of chain down beside their lips. He scraped it up the edge of the man's face, all the way to just below his hairline. Then he pressed its rusty point into the man's forehead to carve the x of their mark upon him so that the transfer of hurting could begin.

LAUNDRY DRIED BY three, with Leona taking it down, and laying it out across the basket. Milla was playing on the tire swing, head first through it, her small fingers clutching desperately at the black sides as she twirled around on it. Mama was napping, as she did in the spring afternoon, and the horses were calm again, after the first wave of screeching. Theron sat out on the dock, twiddling his toes in the icy water, and soon, Daddy came and sat down beside him.

"Give him some rest," Daddy said, but the pain was gone from his eyes, for the first time since Winter Festival.

"No more storms I reckon," Theron said, feeling the weight of his father's arms around his shoulders. A bird was singing from one of the trees, and there were ducks bickering out on the river. Across the bay, the solitary Tangier, so close, so distant.

- "You may be right."
- "Daddy?"
- "Boy?"
- "Why does it have to hurt?"
- "What do you mean?"
- "This life. Why does there have to be a hurting season?" His father had no reply.

That was what disturbed him about life, the very mystery of it, the deepness of its river, where on the surface all was visible, but beneath, something tugged and grabbed and drowned, and yet the current flowed, regardless.

"Look there," his father pointed off toward Tangier. Theron squinted, but could only see the island and the emptiness beyond it.

"The curvature of the earth," his father said.

Theron was fourteen, a man now, he had been kissed, he had helped his father with the serious work of life, he had the mark. But, looking at the eastern horizon, where the world bent and turned, he vowed that one day he would go beyond Chite and Tangier and even Ishmus, to see the places that he Yankee had seen, the golden and sliver cities rising like waves from the distant sea. He would go forth, in the ripe, fair morning of some yonder springtime, to leave his mark upon the world.

Barnabas A Vampire's Love Poem By Stacy Packard

I fear not your burning eyes nor ivory fangs. My neck, pure and unblemished, awaits your first bite.

I am blood of your blood, flesh of your flesh, heart of your heart.

When you call, I will rise. When you command, I will follow. When you ache, I will soothe.

I fear not this consuming hunger, nor the pain inflicted by the morning sun. I will build the home in which you will find sanctuary when night gives way to day.

This curse which has conceived no cure will not be yours to endure alone. From Adam came Eve and now I from you.

I fear not the threat of mortal men nor an existence that has no end. For we are with each other.

We, the unliving proof, that love never dies.



Douglas Clegg with author Edward Lee. Doug is the well-dressed one on the left.

Graveside Chat Douglas Clegg

By Edward Lee

ORŅ AND RAISED in Virginia, Douglas Clegg now lives in sunny Southern California, which he which he charmingly refers to as "the perfect garden of terror. If it isn't drive-bys, it's the serial killers, the pollution, the Big One, or the blondes." In a nutshell, or perhaps a cranial cap, Clegg's already kicked the horror genre hard in the tail with three big books, and accompanying big printings. The poor guy's enjoyed lead-author status at Pocket, and stands neck-deep in good reviews. Plus, he wears great suits! For me personally, the man's fiction has always hit me with an exclusive kind of impact, about like that of a pallet of mason blocks landing on my head from a 20-floor drop, Hence, firing questions at this particular author proved a rare delight.

--Edward Lee

EL: Here's a question I'm sure you've never been asked before. Where do you get your ideas?

DC. I believe the root of a story comes from an experience perceived through a glass darkly. I mean that. I think most fiction writers draw upon resources we've been developing since very early childhood, from observation, and perhaps from an inner sense of what the world looks like before we see it. Our own creative act, thrown into the world. Stories, not just ideas, but fullblown stories seem to spring from something mysterious that I don't even know about myself or the world or other people.

EL: Creativity, then, is an obscure--or even a cabalistic--process?

DC: At least, for me. Maybe that's where I haven't quite reined in what I'm doing. If I were going to give myself a positive criticism of my first three published novels, it 's that there 's a kind of sprawl to them, which can be wonderful because it's like the Yellow Brick Road, and no matter where it takes you, it'll be a ride, and you'll get to the Emerald City by the end. On the other hand, maybe it 'll take you roundabout when there 's a more direct route. Of course, by the time one of my novels has been published. I've done three to four drafts of the story, so with luck it will be a well-planned, if out-ofthe-way journey. GOAT DANCE, for example, my first novel. I wrote it in a white heat of anxiety--I was twentyeight, I had left a fairly well-paying job in tv news, and was holed up in North Hollywood a block away from a wellknown Sex Shop, and, coincidentally, some of the finest bookstores in the L.A. area. So, I was writing twenty pages a day, getting fat on Domino's pizzas, falling asleep with a six-pack, and getting into brawls at the local pub. It was not a pretty picture, but I was going for broke. The first draft was the quickest I've ever produced. It also barely resembled the final draft, except for the main character, Cup, who really was me recast as someone who really had a purpose. But the draft was a mess, and about a year later, I did another one, and then a very fast third before my editor at Pocket bought it. And then, before publication, a fourth draft.

EL: I find that when I'm doing a late draft, I get disconnected. Sure, the story's always better, sharper, but I'll also feel removed from it.

DC: Right. By the time you hit the fourth draft, you don't even see the story anymore, you just see words that don't work in sequence, and scenes that don't move the action. It's both dreadful and wonderful.

EL: You've been at Pocket for three novels: GOAT DANCE, BREEDER, and NEVERLAND. What's next on Clegg's horizon?

DC. Well, Pocket will be publishing my novel THE DARK OF THE EYE sometime next year-1 think late spring or early summer. This one 's a bit different for me because it involves child abuse and medical experiments and cults. The jumping-off point for the story was that news piece about Elizabeth Morgan-the doctor in the Washington area, remember? She claimed that her ex-husband abused their daugher, so she go her daughter.

out of the country, illegally, to protect her, and then went to jail. I don't know if she was in the right or not, but that 's a powerful story. Almost like Greek drama. So, in THE DARK OF THE EYE, a mother is stealing her own daughter. The mother escapes to the one place on the earth she should not. and we find that it's more than just a medical thriller, and not just a simple experiment with a virus, but...well, I can't tell you. Got to have some mystery in life! Let me put it this way, it would be like running into a buddy in Waco to get away from it all, just in time to get fried.

EL: So the relationship between your work and Pocket continues?

DC: Actually, no. It looks right now, at press time, that I'll be saving goodbye to my editor there. Her name 's Linda Marrow, and she's about the finest editor in the business, and a very good friend. But the nature of the beast, and I mean writers, is that sometimes change is good for the work, and a new publisher will often see the writer's material with a different eye. I've had four novels with Pocket, and I think the relationship's gone about as far as it can--for the time being. Although I can't say at the moment, because there's no done deal, my representative is currently negotiating a deal with another publisher. But Pocket has been more than good to me--I think they've gone beyond what most houses would 've done with my first few novels. And I'll miss working with Linda. although--who knows? The business is small enough that I may find myself working with her again soon.

EL: So what's the next project after THE DARK OF THE EYE?

DC: I'm going to be a little cagey here. It's a scoret. It's about psychological reality and personality disorder, and that's all I'm going to say right now. And there are several novels Work on at once, so, hell, I'm not even sure which will come next. I have one completed, unpublished book, about a thousand pages, and I'm not even sure where it's going to land.

EL: Lately you seem to have hit the field pretty hard with short stories.

DC: Those I can talk about, I've had a few published, and I 've got more coming out down the road. People Who Loyé Life was my first, for THE SCREAM FACTORY. It concerns a woman who wants to get out of the small town she's lived in all her life. She wants out REALLY bad. And then Where Flies Are Born, In TEKELI-LI!, about the cost of love for children, cast in a very sick light. More recently, my story Damned If You Do was published in CEMETERY DANCE, detailing a man who loved his family, and who did his duty. This, of course, involved murder. I've got another one coming out in Ellen Datlow's sexual horror anthology, LITTLE DEATHS. The piece is called Ice Palace, and is a fond memoir of my fraternity days, although I strip away at the metaphors of vouthful bonding and get down to the dirt. One in Claudia O'Keefe's next GHOSTTIDE antho, called O. Rare and Most Exquisite! concerning love, flowers, deflowering, and a well-kept secret about female anatomy that only I seem to be aware of. And then this one, in DEATHREALM, probably my favorite. The Hurting Season is about a few things, including tradition and isolation, but to me it's really about the point in a child's life when he realizes that his family is different from other families. There's an invisible rite of passage that, I believe, signals the beginning of maturity. It's part of a cycle of stories about this boy, Theron, his coming of age, and his eventual odyssey through the modern world.

I find that writing a story, or a novel, is an act of creating a false memory--a feeling of "as if this really happened." I'd prefer to spend my life enjoying and celebrating life, but I find more and more that I sit in a room in front of a computer screen, and wonder who these people really are--where do they come from--where are they going? What makes them happy? And writing, I come up with my own answers. My natural bent is horror and mystery, so those tend to be the flights my people board. Sometimes I make their planes crash, and sometimes they land safely. But the weird thing is I love all of

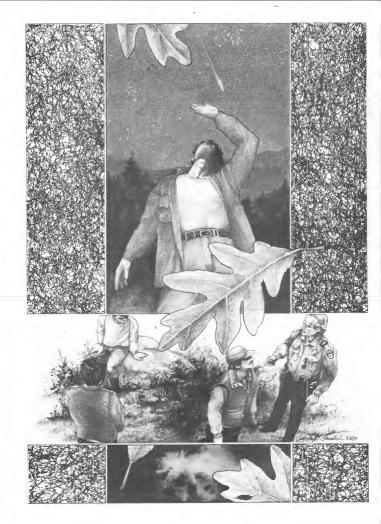
them, even the perpetrators of the nightmares. Maybe them the most, bless their dysfunctional hearts.

EL: What's your read on the direction of the field?

DC: Based on recent experience, horror seems to be coming back with a vengeance. I think the supposed DEATH OF HORROR dovetailed nicely with a general drop in the purchasing of novels all 'round, in '91 and '92. This followed close on the heels of a boom in horror, and, as we all know, every boom is followed by a bust. I also think that outright Splatterpunk, in the conglomerate publishing world, cast a shroud across the word "horror" so that it was as if the mention of this categorization implied severed genitals. A lot of readers got turned off from the more explicitly gory horror--and I feel I can say this because if you look at the writers turning out more traditional stories, as well as the huge sales in YA horror and the recent trend toward sensual, erotic horror, it's not that horror died, it's just that what was considered the New Wave of horror didn't attract a mass audience. But now nobody even calls it horror anymore, they call it the PC word: terror or thriller or whatever. It's still rock and roll to me, as Billy Joel might say. Long live haunted houses, vampires, Indian burial mounds, and evil children, contrary to one publisher's code.

EL: Any closing wisdoms regarding craft, horror, tales, etc?

DC: Just that I look forward to a good horror novel or story the way kids wait for the ice cream truck on melting summer days: with joyful suspense. Wonderful dread. Or the passionate fear that the truck has already passed. I hope I 'm capable of writing a story that comes close to those feelings, in the same way that I'll always want tread THE STORY THAT KEPT ME UP ALL NIGHT. As ambitions go, I think it's a noble one.



PHOTOS OF LEG

HAD FORGOTTEN all about the Mary Hendricks case until that chill, drizzle-gray morning when I found a 9" x 12" manila envelope tossed onto my desk at the precinct house. The return address was that of a detective in New Hampshire who had also worked on the case of the missing school teacher, Mary Hendricks of Worcester, Massachusetts. I set down my coffee, plopped into my chair and slit the envelope open.

It contained a letter and four blown-up photographs.

One of these showed a pick-up truck with its front end smashed; the others displayed what at first appeared to be a large tree branch. John Hardy, my friend from the "live free or die" state said that he had acquired the pictures from a hunter who claimed to have run into a strange animal while driving in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. The thing that looked like a branch, it turned out, was supposedly part of an animal's leg, left behind as the beast hobbled off into the woods.

I examined the photos more closely. Had they been taken with a decent camera initially, the enlargements might have been a lot clearer. The hunter had placed a man's work boot beside the leg to give it a sense of scale. Now, I'm no country boy, having lived and worked most of my life in the gray city of Worcester, but I could tell that the leg did not belong to anything one would expect to plow into on a wooded New Hampshire back road. Deer don't have ankles nine inches thick, and moose don't have glassy yellow tusks sticking out where hooves ought to be.

John went on in the letter to claim that he did not feel this was a hoax. "I can personally vouch for the integrity of this witness, having known Victor Strong for nearly ten years. It would be very uncharacteristic of him to fake something of this nature. I am convinced that he believes he saw, and ran into, some type of animal,"

As to the question of just what the pictures really showed--we may never know, for although the thing was solid and hard, it rotted away in a matter of minutes after being exposed to the flashes of the camera. If it had lasted longer we could have taken it to some scientific experts to examine.

What do some pictures of a smashed pick-up and a strange, black severed limb have to do with the Mary Hendricks case? I believe there is a definite link, and next year, when I retire from the force, I intend to use my free time to pursue my theories. Who knows, maybe I'll put together a book about it. I always did want to try my hand at writing.

THREE YEARS HAD passed between the time we closed

the Mary Hendricks case and the morning I received the envelope. There was nothing abnormal about the case, in the beginning--people vanish all the time. Mary Hendricks was a twenty-seven year old math teacher, living in Worcester and teaching at a middle school in Westborough. We got a call from her sister. Mary had not returned from a trip to the White Mountains with the man she had been dating.

We did all the routine work: Mary's sister, Joyce Welsh, came in to talk to me. She had become worried when her sister did not return on the Sunday night following her trip, to pick up her pet dog. The following morning, Joyce tried calling Mary at the school and learned that she had not shown up for work, nor had she called to say she wouldn't be in. Calls to Ms. Hendricks' house were similarly unproductive.

Joyce had tried calling Mary's male friend, his place of work, and even drove to his apartment. She grew increasingly concerned. She thought about calling around to hospitals to see if there had been any car accidents, and listened to newscasts, waiting to hear her sister's name attached to some horrid misfortune. There was no sign of Mary or her date, Roger Falkner.

Joyce had never liked the fact that her younger sister was dating Falkner. They were an incongruous mix. He was a "Mr. Dashing" type, on the outside, going out of his way to downplay his considerable intellect. He did computer research at a place in Framingham and spent weekends seeking adventure. She was a homebody-type, near-reclusive and book-indulgent on weekends. Perhaps the contrast fed the attraction.

Before long, Roger was all Mary could talk about. He was fascinating. He was romantic, pensive, philosophical, cultured, athletic. He knew all about computers, history and astronomy. On weekends, he'd take her canoeing, or hiking in the mountains while under the "enlightenment" of mescaline. He even got her to go dancing--she the mild, shy bookworm, actually kicking up her heels beneath the strobes.

Joyce sat nervously drumming the table, chasing cigarette with cigarette, glancing about with impatient eyes. "I hated him," she seethed. "He was too dazzling. I'd never seen Mary lose it so bad over a guy."

"Did he strike you as dangerous?" I'd asked.

"No, I wouldn't say that. Maybe I was being paranoid, or over-protective, 'cause she's my sister. I don't know. I think she should have gotten to know him better before getting so involved."

"Do you think he might have done something to her?"

"Christ, I hope not. Maybe they're lost up there. But you never know what another person is capable of. I worked with a woman who lived with a guy for twenty years, and all that time he was molesting kids, and she thought he was a frigging saint, until some kid blew the whistle on him. You never know about people."

I agreed with her.

"Why exactly were they going up to the mountains on that particular weekend?"

"He wanted to show her the Orionid meteor shower. He's really into stuff like that. Every year these meteors go by at the same time in October. Supposedly you can see twenty-five of them an hour."

IT WAS WHILE examining Mary Hendricks' apartment that I realized I liked her. There was a pleasant, though sort of lonely mood to the place. She smiled, dirtf-blonde and friendly, from a family photo on the living room wall. There were dried flower arrangements she had arfully created and positioned, and a plump blue stuffed teddy bear on the bed by her pillow. Gnawed rubber pet toys hid under the kitchen table. A curio shelf held a collection of tiny porcelain animals alongside a bulletin board crowded with get well cards her students had sent when she'd had her wisdom teeth out.

I went through her closets. I found boxes, scrap books, a retired, less-than-plump teddy bear, poetry written in passion and hidden in embarrassment. Her wardrobe was coxy-jeans, sweaters and granny nighties. There was nothing to give me any indication of where she might be, but I walked out of the place with a heightened sense of concern for Mary Hendricks.

A lot of these missing persons cases involve people who, for whatever reason, choose to up and leave their routine lives. But I didn't think Mary was one of them. Though some are sporadic enough not to pack, I could not imagine someone as home-centered as she leaving behind her scrapbooks, her blue bear, or the cherished dog her sister had been keeping. As I drove off into the rain, my wipers smearing the night, I concluded that Mary was either lost, or something worse...

ROGER FALKNER'S APARTMENT painted an intriguing picture of the man who rented it. It took up the second story of a refurbished tree-encroached Victorian in Grafton, not far from the Westborough line.

Falkner was neater than Ms. Hendricks, more stylish in his choices of decor. The walls displayed art prints and maps of constellations, a shelf lumpy with fossils; one wall in his study was comprised entirely of books. The books ranged in study was comprised entirely of books. The books ranged in South America to UFO encounters. There was a lot of expensive computer equipment and an antique telescope mounted reverently on a marble stand. Mr. Falkner made big bucks.

I saw nothing to suggest he might be a psycho-type: no thumb-worn books on serial killers, no guns or collection of knives. The sexiest magazine this guy read was OMNI. I did not get the impression that I was looking for a killer. It seemed to me that Roger Falkner was an interesting man with a passionate interest in life.

WE SPENT SEEMINGLY endless hours going over the computer discs we'd taken from the Falkner place. We could not make a lot of sense from much of it-it seemed to be in a form of code. The stuff we could decipher was unenlightening: legal records, accounting information and the like.

"This is giving me a headache," said my partner, Rob Williamson, as we sat in front of a computer screen, late in the night. The particular disc we were looking at contained sporadic sets of numbers along with clustered series of asterisks.

"Maybe he was nuts," Rob went on. "What's with this crap? It doesn't seem to mean anything."

"Maybe," I offered, "their patterns have some significance. They almost look like they could be maps, or something."

Rob nodded. "That's an idea." He went over to my desk and fished through the clutter until he found a map of the area where the missing couple was supposed to have gone. We compared it to the jumbled congregations of asterisks to see if they matched up. They did not.

Another program showed dots streaking green across the screen

"Meteors?" I wondered.

We were also baffled by a machine that we'd found standed in the cellar. Rob said it was like a super short-wave radio. We could pick up every country you could name. Apparently Falkner had built it himself.

I was half asleep in my chair while Rob, ever the diehard, scanned through another of Falkner's ambiguous computer programs at the next desk. Suddenly that damn radio unit went off. I jolted up in my seat, startled by the crackling voice.

"What country do you have that thing on now?" I asked, irritated.

"I don't know. Sounds Portuguese."

"Sounds like bad plumbing."

The voice, if you could call it that, lasted only a moment, then there was static. We never did identify the language.

There were a number of audio cassettes, with dates and frequencies listed, that had been packed in a strong box alongside the radio we had retrieved from the cellar of Falkner's place. We played these back, hoping not to hear teenage girls being tortured. There were no screams, no voices at all, in fact; only noisy pulsations and electronic gurgles, as if he had recorded a drowning walkic-talkic.

Twelve days had passed, and still there was no sign of Mary Hendricks and Roger Falkner.

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I WAS WORKING through lunch when I got the call. The boys in New Hampshire had scored, Falkner's jeep had been found in the woods, upside down, yer curiously undamaged. Rob and I took off immediately and though we sped all the way, it was dark by the time we arrived.

The case was getting stranger. The car had not crashed, as to how it had been flipped over, we could only speculate. We searched the area with flashlights, too impatient to wait for sunlight. It had rained heavily, so the chance of finding good footprints was near nil. A soggy notebook lay ten feet from the vehicle, the muddy pages covered with patterns of smeared ball point numbers. I recognized the writing as Falkner's.

"It's like the stuff we found on his computer discs," my partner Rob pointed out. I nodded.

One of the uniform men called to us from several yards away. We jogged over. He stood over a squashed version of the radio transmitter we had discovered in Falkner's basement.

"Looks like somebody stomped on it," I said.

"Somebody would have to be pretty heavy to do that,"
the officer noted.

WE DIDN'T GET much sleep that night. I remember sitting in the local police station staring at a picture of Falkner while Rob paced back and forth with coffee in hand. I found myself talking to the man in my mind...

"Where are you, Mr. Falkner? Are you alive? Where is Mary Hendricks? Did you do something to her?"

The man in the ploto stared back with dark eyes and an instrubble little smile. He didn't look like a killer to me, but then I'd come to discover that you could never tell something like that from someone's face. Most killers didn't have the conspicuous crazed look of a Manson; most of them looked like your average joe.

THE FINALE CAME the following morning. Rob and I were following the local team leader, John Hardy, up a steep ridge when suddenly a walkie-talkie crackled. The voice on the other end said, "We got a body...."

Rob and I turned to look at each other. Whatever thread of hope had been dangling was suddenly snatched away.

We joined the other squad. They were standing there with dour faces, alongside the remains of a tent. Besides the two sleeping bags, we found a savagely mauled Mary Hendricks. She lay face up in a blue down jacket and jeans, sprawled amidst damp oak leaves in a shadowy, tree-cramped gully. Decay and bloating had done a number on the pleasant young blonde woman who had smiled at me from the photograph. Her throat was a ragged yawn of tendons and congealed liquids; much of her chest had been scooped out. I trembled, kneeling there in the leaves and the stench.

"What do you make of these wounds?" I asked.

"Could've been some kind of animal," Rob suggested.
"You got bears around here?"

"It's possible," John Hardy said, "but they don't look like the type of claw-marks I'd expect."

"It doesn't look like the work of a bladed instrument,"
Rob said. "Well, unless someone had an incredibly sharp
shovel of some kind."

I stood up and looked around. "Only one body. No sign of Falkner. Maybe somebody killed both of them." For some reason or another it would have bothered me less is some stranger, rather than the man she was romantically involved with the control of the control of the control of the control of the way the control of the control of the control of the control of the way the control of the control

with, had done this herrible thing to Mary Hendricks.
"No sign of Falkner," one of the men reported.

Maybe it was my rage at seeing the woman's body, for as the seconds clicked by, I could feel my hunger for a suspect escalating, and Falkner was becoming an easy target to fixate upon. There had been no other known murders in this region, no reports of suspicious characters, no sightings of rabid

bears--just those two camped out under the stars....

Standing there over the body, I found myself asking God to let me and my magnum find Roger Falkner before the others

WE CONTINUED TO search the area. Noon was approaching when inhuman howls echoed across the landscape of bare branches and hazy heaped mountains. We followed the noise, guns drawn. The local investigator led the way with a shotgun, as if dowsing for the source. The earth was steep, and it was slippery trying to balance on wet pine needles and leaves. Rob pointed at something that was moving in the trees beneath us.

"Look!"

When we moved closer, we saw the figure throw its arms out and charge, crying shrilly. I took aim--it was Roger Falkner. His face was gaunt...he had been wandering these woods for days. Tears streaked his muddy face and he smiled sadly. I lowered my weapon.

Falkner would not respond to questioning. He just giggled nervously and wept. We searched him, found only his wallet and an extension microphone. There were dried blood stains on his shirt, but we could not tell if these were from Mary Hendricks or from the scratches on his face. Although we couldn't prove she hadn't been attacked by a bear, we thought it best to book him. He was obviously, possibly dangerously, mad.

I'll spare you most of the legal complexities that followed. Falkner was found unfit to stand trial. Most people I know feel firmly that he is guilty of murdering Mary Hendricks, even though the actual evidence against him was, in my eyes, weak. No murder weapon was ever found and the autopsy was inconclusive as to what had been used to cause the terrible wounds. Emotion influences everything, and I think the hideousness of the woman's death called for a conviction, just so that people could put a tidy close to the case in their minds. The masses seemed content to have the man locked up. But the more time that passes, the less likely I am to suspect that Falkner had anything to do with the school teacher's death.

Falkner will reside at the mental hospital for a very long time. He has not, so far as I know, said an intelligible word these past three years. He cries a lot, screams in his sleep and trembles constantly. Thus far he has not responded well to drug therapy.

The only thing he does which expresses some form of communication is draw. Strangely, though, he only draws one thing. Over and over he draws this same picture. I have one here on my desk, alongside the photos of that black piece of lea

The crayon picture shows a man, drawn for scale-size, standing next to a spindly, ten-foot tall black creature that is vaguely human, but with features resembling an insect's. The background is streaked with the blurs of a meteor shower.



INCE MY LAST article, many of you have asked what has William Blake got to do with the British Horror scene. Well, he writes horror poetry stemming from a great perverse imagination and mind-stretching mysticism. He is studied for English literature exams in British schools alongside Wordsworth, Dickens, Shakespeare, et. al. He's British. And he's dead. QED.

Well, today, the vampires are selling vanity mirrors to us mortals. They certainly know how to make a hard sell.

Enough of my sorrows. Let's get down to it. I didn't tell you last time that many of the small press editors I mentioned, plus writers such as Paul Pinn (about to appear ubiquitously), Gary Couzens (about to appear in F & SF MAGAZINE), D F Lewis (about to disappear, maybe because he gets no sleep according to DARK SIDE magazine), Nicholas Royle, Kim Cowie, John Duffield, Mark Samuels, Marni Scoffdio, etc. etc., irregularly attend meetings which randomly happen every second Tuesday of the month in the Shakespeare pub directly opposite Victoria British Rail Station in London SWI. If any of you are over, you can tap into a part of the British horror scene direct and guzzle a few drunken pints with us. Then make sick patterns for scrying in the Gents (or Ladies).

The delightful Pam Creais of the excellent DEMENTIA. If magazine has mentioned something worth recording. Stanley Kubrick has taken action against the Seala Cinema in King's Cross, London, for recently proceeding with a so-called illegal screening of his cult classic film A CLOCKWORK ORANGE (based on a novel by one of my favourite writers Anthony Burgess). Mr Kubrick has long held objections to the film ever again being shown in the UK or released on video. Something to do with a fear of copycar crimes, I believe. I am old enough to have seen this excellent film when it was released in the 60's, so, like Pam, I'm incensed that a private cinema club like the Scala should be facing such problems about a film from the person who created that film. A petition is currently going the rounds in that neck of the woods.

The question of "copycats" opens a whole can of worms.

And what, may I ask, is wrong with cans of worms? Better than pork scratchings. Scriously, I am philosophically unconvinced about this argument that many make about "horror" creations. To the pure, all things are pure, I say.

As predicted, a new magazine emerged in Northern Ireland called GROTESQUE—excellently produced for a first issue. I admire David Logan's evident enthusiasm to produce this, but was worried that he printed one of my stories, then wrote to tell me he thought my stuff did more harm than good. Well, maybe he's right. I was hurt, however. Talking about new magazines, an up-and-coming horror writer called Kirk S. King, who currently works as a chef in northern England, whom I've met at conventions, is bringing out one called NIGHT DREAMS. Good luck to him.

I've had the pleasure, on many occasions, of meeting Stephen Jones, the British horror impresario. And to round off my piece this time, I'll outline some of the things he's told me he's up to. He and David Sutton have delivered DARK VOICES 5 (aka THE PAN BOOK OF HORROR 34) to Pan Books for October publication. About time this great series was bought up in America, I say. Steve has also delivered THE MAMMOTH BOOK OF ZOMBIES to Robinson/Carroll & Graf due out towards the end of 93 and also working on BEST NEW HORROR 4 with Ramsey Campbell. (Incidentally, there was a revealing interview with Ramsey in a recent DEMENTIA 13, followed by an unjustifiably scathing letter in the issue after that from Mark Samuels comparing Ramsey to an old commissar of the USSR, and I believe this letter is going to create an enormous wave of anger against Samuels and support for Ramsey in the next issue coming up.) That 's enough digression. To finish off about Steve Jones, I keep seeing him on British TV expounding on vampires--chat shows, documentaries, etc. Vampires have been a big thing here, recently. I believe that the Vampire Society, run by a lady who lives in my area of Surrey, is really taking off.

Well, I just looked in the mirror. Another digression, I fear. Another sorrow.

"And many sorrows, oblique across the Atlantic Vale."

--William Blake

(JERUSALEM, chapter 2)

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By James Robert Smith

AST THE TANGLE of thorny brush the forest Bryan stood beside the road and peered into the darkness there where the sunlight was stopped by palmetto fronds and vegetation he knew only as "sticker bushes." Slash pines were grasping up and out of the green tangle, making a wall beyond which the shade seemed inviting in the hot sun. He stamped down with a great, sneakered foot,

crushing the springy mass of stems that grinned toward the naked flesh of his huge calves with pointed teeth of thorns. He took another step and left the roadside, his size thirteen prints glaring in the grayness of the sandy-dirty road. A buzzing dragonfly and the sun saw him vanish into the woods.

Once past the barrier of thin pines, each competing with the other for their share of light and earth and water, there was a canopy of sorts. Anemic vines draped sickly down to the forest floor, the odd palmetto groping for the dappled spots where photosynthesis could take place. In the open space beneath the young magnolias and wimpy live oaks, Bryan paused to check his pillar legs for any thorns that might be lingering in the angry red wounds that now criss-crossed where his cutoff overalls did not protect. Thin fingers probed at the muscles of his thighs and calves, seemed strangely out of place on one so massive as he. Little boy lips were drawn straight, unreadable across teeth that would be revealed slightly crooked, slightly yellow were he to smile, or to grimace. He did neither.

In a moment, sweat trickling from the dark brown of his hairline, he looked up from the task of plucking thorns, squinting into the bit of maritime forest, this plot of regrowth amidst the clear-cutting that had taken place twenty years before. He stood straight, and one seeing him there in the shadows might have thought him round, soft. But he reached out with a stout right arm: even in the near dark one could read the map of thick muscle; roadwork for quiet, waiting strength.

Peering about, he got his bearings and moved to his left, toward the lake that he knew was waiting, lapping with slow, lazy waves at the wet shore. He and his pal, Scott, had planted a sunny spot with what he hoped would be a budding marijuana garden. They had jammed seeds into the ground; and small plants they had germinated in wet napkins on his windowsill. A couple of weeks had passed, and he hoped now to see some results reaching for the sky with fragile green leaves. Bryan was not a patient sort.

Going round, he found the place where he and his lean, blond friend had knelt and dug. Nothing. He got down and made his knees wet there in the loam and saw shriveled stems

like sixteen penny nails withering in the Georgia heat. The fucked little crop.

"Shit." He hissed and groaned and stood, angry that the plants had not done as he and Scott had heard they would do if you planted and ignored them so that they'd soar to fifteen feet and ripen into thick, tarry buds that could be dried and sold for 300 bucks a pound. For two weeks he had awakened each morning and lain in his bed, counting pounds and three hundred dollar wads straining against the fabric of his pockets. Then, without rising, he would reach out with his thin, misplaced piano-player's fingers, and retrieve a joint rolled the night before. And he'd smoke and think about selling; think about moving out of the slum in which he lived; think about this momma and daddy dead of heart attack and grief; think about the quiet before he would rise and begin his plodding day.

"Shit," again. He sat back, ignoring the dampness that crept through the faded blue fabric of his overalls, the same dampness that had killed his also faded garden; and he drew a recfer from his front pocket, a butane flame appeared in his left hand and he was smokine, at rest; chilled and content.

A deerfly found him hiding there, found blood smorgasbord on the Clingman's Dome of his left biceps before his right hand flickered like a blur and wiped it dead and crushed. The recfer was perched expertly in his lips as he sucked, held a lungful, forgot about the deerfly, wondering a few seconds hence where the blood on his right hand had.come from. Weed.

"Hev."

The voice had actually scared him sober. His first impulse after the initial stiffening of his back and shoulders, was to whirl to his feet and look to what was now behind him, some mask of rage on his boyish face. Instead, he twisted his neck, peering over his right shoulder, and did a good job of not appearing surprised. He recognized the form that was silhouetted in a ray of sun that had sneaked through the leafy roof above them.

"Reddog," he said, ignoring the pained expression on the girl's face. "Don't sneak up on me like that." He said nothing else and faced front, sucking on the cigarette, searching for the high surprise had stolen from him. He leaned back and closed his eyes, listening to her tread as she moved toward him and squatted next to his bear-like form stretched out for her.

"What are you doing back here?" she asked. No mention of the epithet. Bryan had heard Scott and others refer to her as Reddog, but he had no idea where the nickname had arisen. He assumed it was her rust brown hair, pale features. What else?

"What the hell are you doing back here?" He opened one eye and squinted at her: a blue chip of glass glinting.

"Followed you from Orange Park." When he closed his eyes, she leaned over, her gaze navigating the curve and bulge of his arms, the great mass of his chest nearly revealed pink for her under the straps of his overalls. The eye came back to life and he plucked the reefer from his lips, offering it to her.

"Followed me?" He watched as she took the smoke from Bryan and drew on it, her pale face growing paler with the effort.

"Yes." She handed it back so that he had to sit up to take it from her. He said nothing in return. "How did your muscles get like that?" she finally asked. There was a wetness between her legs, and she had already decided that she wanted him there, penetrating, and she had only to wait until he asked.

"Liftin' weights." He offered her the reefer again, feeling the slow, lazy high reaching up from his gut to the base of his brain, pulling the shade on the hard edges that shone in some window of opportunity. She reached out, but instead of taking the joint, she passed it up and her nail-bitten fingers touched down on a wide plain of upper arm that could pump a weight of iron to bewilder the common man.

The girl edged closer, her gray tee shirt tight against her own flesh, her nipples standing rigidly so that he could see them through bra and shirt. "Can I?" She gripped his aem, felt his left pectoral with her other hand. "I'w wanted to touch you for weeks," she told him, not seeing the confusion, not knowing she explored wirgin flesh.

"What?" he thought stupidly of Mr. Brayboy, her father.
"Come on." Glenda (her real rame) placed her hands
behind his bull neck and planted a wet kiss on his lips. The
reefer lay and smoldered where it had fallen. "Let me see. I
want to see wour body. Let me see veur dick."

Already her hand was down into the loose folds of Bryan's oweralls, and his penis was standing rock hard at attention, her warm fingers pulling at him. "Wait," he said; but somehow she had levered his zipper and her jeans and panties were down her girl's legs and off, hanging by her right ankle. He looked, saw the damp black triangle pointing to somewhere, saw her guiding his penis inside. "Oh! Oh, fuck!" He didn't know if she had said it; or was it himself? He was riding now, fucking, his four by four arms pulling at her, wrapping her fifteen-year-old bedy in his great, clumsy strength, hearing her breathing hoarsely, feeling the warmth, the tight wetness of her. She gasped. He came.

Rolling off of her, he lay back, breathing hard, thinking about it, wondering who he would tell. And so it was several minutes before he turned his eyes in her direction, saw her own mouth gaped wide, her own eyes staring up into the thin beam of sunlight gleaming down into her face. And he realized that Glenda (Reddog) Brayboy was dead.

HE DIDN'T TRY to revive her. She was so obviously lifeless that he felt it was useless to try. Her arms were limp, fingers dangling whenever he pulled at her wrists, feeling for a pulse. Bryan pressed his ear to her chest again and again, listening for a sign. Waiting as the sun arced in the blue sky, he sat and chased away the big black flies that had already found the girl's body. Looking at her there, he realized how small she was, how frail.

Jesus.

There was no way he could tell anyone what had

Squinting at the blanket of

leaves she now wore, he could

make out the form of her

skeleton, could even see that

her mouth was gaping still

happened. If he did, if he tried to explain, he knew what they'd say. They would accuse him of murder. But it wasn't murder. He didn't know what had happened-perhaps he'd crushed her, or suffocated her somehow; maybe she'd had an attack-but he had not murdered her. In the bit of wood, he sat, became a bloated point of paranoia, staring with rabbit eyes past the line of trees to the road, flinching and withdrawing when a pair of pickup trucks trundled by along the washboard sandy way, leaving billows of gray in their wakes. His greatest fear was that friend Scott would stop by, as Bryan had done, to check on the plants. It didn't happen, though

When the light was fading, and he was like a drop of sweat, hair tacked by sally moisture to his scalp, he cast about him in the verge of the woods until he found a section of rusted tin. He bent the rectal into a rude scoop and went back to the body, where he began to dig, carefully setting aside the topmost layer of forest floor before he began to excavate. Moving the wet earth away, he ignored the growing shadows, paid no attention to the stiffening form that had been a young girl. Bryan continued down. When he was pacing about in an oblong trough as deep us his waist he decided to ston.

Closing his eyes, he grasped the body by its ankles, was

repulsed at the wetpaper texture of it, and dragged it into the hole. The torso landed with a meaty thud. Flies followed it in. Ouickly, he grabbed up the scoop and ladled the gray-black dirt atop his deed. What earth would not fit back, he carried to the edge of the lake and tossed in. Finally, he returned to the shallow gravesite, and he carefully put

back the layer of wet loam and blackening leaves that had lain atop the place. By then, there was almost no light by which to see, but only a trained eye could have told that there'd been a disturbance.

Bryan flung the section of metal into the lake, hearing it splash somewhere offshore. Across, on the other side, he could see the lights of the paper mill as the huge factory geared up for night work. Fumes and smoke and stench rose into the sky. Bryan weni home.

THE BEST OF it was that no one knew what had become of Glenda Brayboy. She had a reputation for going off with older men of questionable means. More than one of the local boys had seen her in the backseat of one auto or another, bouncing in the laps of some of Port City's uglier denizens. Some of those men were brought in, slapped around, let go. But no one truly knew what had happened to her. Lots of teenaged girst too wild for their parents to handle had vanished into the haze of a Georgia summer. And Glenda's parents were poor; there was no pull for an extraordinary effort on the part of the police. So no one krew.

The worst of it was Mr. Brayboy.

Bryan had meant to avoid the Brayboy house, where he and Scott had a mutual friend in Neil, Glenda's older

brother. Scott had suggested a visit. With his paranoia rising, Bryan had decided that it was wiser to go than to beg off. It

The Brayboy house was a spare, frame affair. There was a plain, concrete porch that led into a small den. From there, the rest of the house was a dab of kitchen and dining area, three little bedrooms which were shared by six kids and the parents. A back porch had been screened in so that Neil odd sleep there in the summertime. Scott and Bryan had gone into the den, the television humming, three of the younger children staring into it while Neil sat and gazed at the wall, his sticklike arms around his thirteen year old sister who sobbed into his shallow chest. In the back, through closed doors and above the drone of the TV, Bryan could hear barrel-chested, crewcut Mr. Brayboy wailing like a spoiled child with a bruised knee.

So Bryan had sat on the bare floor, trying to mumble small talk to the remaining Brayboy children, to Neil and to Scott, too. Finally, though, he could stand no more of the old man's poorly concealed crying. He had made eye contact with Scott: "For God's sake, let's get out of here." Silently, the two had left.

"Later, Neil."

The worn tires of Bryan's truck did not quite bark as he pulled away from the house, making his way off of the oak-lined street, beneath overhanging branches dripping Spanish moss in the fading light of another summer evening.

On the way out of that hell, Scott had said to Bryan, but not turning to

face him: "You know, man, I fucked Reddog. Bunch o' times. When I was hard up, you know."

Bryan said nothing, continued to drive, negotiating the streets that led toward Altamaha Boulevard and thence to the causeway out to the Golden Isles ripe with big houses full of rich people.

"Did you ever fuck her?" Scott continued to watch the road while his giant of a buddy drove silently on.

"Nah. Not me."

"I'm surprised. She wanted to fuck you real bad."

IN JULY, BRYAN got the balls up to go back to the site. Strangely, Scott had not once mentioned the little plants he and Bryan had placed there. Just another small adventure forgotten in a haze of smoke. It dominated Bryan's thoughs, though. He could not forget it, and awoke each morning, rolling out of his tangle of dirty sheets and wondering when the cops would show, when the phone would ring; when crying Mr. Brayboy would appear at his window, shotgun in hand. He knew it was crazy to go back to the scene of the crime, but he couldny't help himself.

One warm morning, he stuck and envelope full of seeds in his pocket, thinking that he'd have an excuse for being there if Scott somehow showed up. He drove to the cemetery down Maine's Bluff Road, and he parked there, quickly ducking into the woods and making his way circuitously to the spot. Under the trees, he looked there and felt his heart skip, felt his blood run like slush. He pimpled as chills crept up his back and down his arms.

Where he had buried the girl there was an oblong depression, as if she had somehow dug her way free and the earth had settled into the space she had once filled. Thinking precisely that had happened, Bryan cast about, looking for her exposed corpse rotting in the brush. Then he stepped up to the grave and realized what had truly occurred.

Reddog had merely decomposed; and the earth had settled where her flesh had been. Bryan hunkered down and looked. You could tell what was here, what had been done. Squinting at the blanket of leaves she now wore, he could make out the form of her skeleton, could even see that her mouth was gaping still, a tiny scoop where the earth had sunk to enter the cavity once filled by tongue, throat, brain. He looked, staring, thinking about what he should do.

He took the seeds out of his pocket, and he jammed one into the cavity that indicated her mouth three feet beneath sunken earth.

THE STRANGEST THING was this: when he went back at the end of August, the heat pressing down wet, like warm cotton in his mouth, the seed had borne a plant taller than Bryan, as great and green and as full as any he'd seen in the pages of HIGH TIMES. In the late afternoon miasma he'd reached down and pulled the thing up by its base, half expecting to find Reddog's skull hanging on, screaming at him as he pulled it free like some pustule from sick flesh. Only sand and clods of black dripped from the nerve-like net of fine roots. Under cover of dark, he tossed the harvest in the back of his pickup truck and drove home where he hung it from the crossbar in his parents' unused closet.

In time, the fat buds shriveled into tarry thumbs; and dry leaves were ready for smoking. He loaded his pipe.

BRYAN WAS IN the den of his dead parents' house. His water pipe sat before him, thin tendrils of smoke spiraling up to the low ceiling. Mick Jagger and company spoke to him from the sixties as the record went round, round. The first toke had stoned him. The very first. Bryan had heard of shit that did that, but until now he had never had any. He leaned back, pipe in hand, toking from time to time as the inclination struck him. The room filled with smoke and he reclined further into the gauzy state he so preferred and so seldom found. A brown grocery sack full of the homegrown sat beside him, and in the hours that ground slowly on he reached in and refilled his bowl as he needed to. Side B played and the tone arm went back for another trip every forty-some minutes. The Stones sang on and on for Her Majesty.

And in the pauses, Bryan heard Reddog. She was sighing, gasping; there was a keening wail that might have been a strangled scream that perhaps he had failed to truly hear in the throes of taking his dick to that first flesh-inspired orgasm. She was in the weed; in the snoke in his lungs; in the chemical that now flowed in his veins, through his brain. Bryan had heard her talking to him in her single note monologue. He liked what he heard. He wanted to share it with his friends.

SCOTT AND BILL and Stu and Mike and Warren and a host of pals and acquaintances paraded through the opium den party his parents' home had become. Bryan toked and shared the smoke and made each of them pause, listening as he took the records off of the turntable and forced each to sit calmly and quietly under the threat of his giant's strength.

"Do you hear it?"

"Yeah, man. I hear it."

"What's it like?"

"Like a girl. Yeah, man, like a girl."

The answers pleased him.

LATER, BRYAN WENT back; and he planted a seed in the juncture of the dead girl's legs, anticipating the result.







N 1952 I escaped from my little, one-whistle hometown of Artesia and was living in Austin, Texas enrolled as a junior at The University. My incipient brilliance and scholastic image were no longer tarnished by hitching rides to Calvin Junior College for a quarter a trip in a '39 Chevy panel truck with another country kid who commuted from his mother's house at a bait camp on Galveston Bay.

One of my fellow room and boarders at Mrs. Reese's house for male students was a rich kid from West Texas who had just come into a brand new blue and white 1952 Buick coupe that I had attached myself to like a second spare tire. While he lived in West Texas with his momma, his daddy lived in Houston and he and I were invited to spend the long Easter weekend at his daddy's fishing camp on the San Bernard River at Churchill Bridge.

Late that first afternoon, Jack and I took Big Jack's 16 foot lone Star aluminum skiff and big 18-horse Evinrude on a reconnoirte downriver looking for a likely place to fish the next day. The San Bernard was a lazy, slow, freshwater river at Churchill Bridge, decorated on both sides by wild Muscadine grape vines, huge old moss-draped oaks, native pecan trees and small, scattered clumps of ancient man-planted Magnolias marking the site of long forgotten prepublic plantations of Moses Austin's original colonists. A few miles downstream the trees turned to salt cedar and marsh grass as the river got salty from the encroaching tides. The land got flat and the mosquitos took over from the bees and the butterflies as we approached the hostile environment of the Gulf of Mexico.

It was mild, calm afternoon with a light breeze out of the northwest, which meart no surf. We could follow the river right out through San Bernard Pass and into the Gulf of Mexico if we felt like it. We did just that. Deep clear water was running out through the pass bounded by a clean, lonesome sandy beach on its South side and a mound covered by a stand of salt cedars on the North.

Slow moving clusters of shrimp, visible only by their black stalked eyes, were parted and streaked through by the silver flashes of shad hurrying out the pass to the open Gulf on the outgoing tide.

The bar off the South side of the pass was close inshore, giving shelter to the beach and forming a pocket to hold fish out of the breaking surf. We could fish the clear running water of the pass on both the ebb and flow of the tide and the offshore pocket inside the bar at slack water.

This was a charmed place, the way it might have looked when Cabeza de Vaca and the Krankawas roamed these

beaches four hundred years ago; clean, pure and quiet from man noises. I caught myself talking low like I was in church while I eagerly pointed out its perfections to a guy who had grown up around rocks, dust, mesquite and cactus with a few hair goats thrown in for decoration.

We had to come back to give this place a first-class fishing but I couldn't resist a few casts at the dving ebb tide. My third cast with a gold Johnson Sprite spoon produced a strike that warped a bend in my split bamboo rod as I reared back to set the hook. The little white metal Shakespeare bait casting reel jumped and screamed in my hands as I tried to tighten the drag while the light braided linen line smoked through the level-wind and whizzed off through the eyes of the bucking rod. I got a glance of the shadow of the bull red's roll as he flipped his spade tail to change course to intercept the gold flash made by the lure. I never saw him again as he robbed me of four bits worth of line and the nearly new, two bit, artificial lure. I had never in my life felt better about losing seventy-five cents even though there never was a prayer in Hell of handling him on that light tackle. He was every bit of 40 pounds if he was an ounce.

Jack insisted that we go back and get enough gear to spend the night and do this place up right. We roared back in to Churchill Bridge and stocked up on beer, ice, bacon, coffee, more and heavier tackle, a cast net and some other stiff from Bio Jack and oot back to the nass right at dark.

The ebb tide had died leaving slack water in the pass so we decided to make camp on the South side and have a few beers while we were waiting for the new flood to begin. The wind had freshened at dusk and shifted to the Southeast pushing breaking surf across the bar sanding-up the water in the offshore pocket. It wasn't really too sandy to fish, but we needed a break and a few beers before we got real serious about loading up our ice box. Catching fish ain't all there is to goin' fishing.

The two steaks out of Big Jack's freezer belonged over the driftwood coals of our camp fire instead of on the ice in the cooler. After a few more beers and 18 ounces of Porterhouse beef, lying around the fire seemed like a fine way to wait for the tide. The steady sound of the light surf breaking over the bar and the gentle swish as the bar-tamed waves caressed the beach, the sizzle of the Coleman lantern, the cool offshore breeze and a warm campfire had made me as limp and easy as a wore-out dishrag.

I was wide awake out of a deep sleep and sitting bolt upright in my bedroll staring back at Jack. The hair on the back of my neck was standing straight up and tingling like each one was growing out of its own little battery and my heart was pumping like its governor was busted. "Did-did you hear something?"

Jack put his finger to his lips and made a soft shissin sound while very slowly turning his head from side to side as his eyes banged against the sides of their sockets while racing one another across his face.

The bright moon shining in patches between the drifting low clouds left sinister clusters of funcreal blackness moving slowly over the water like the measured steps of pallbearers. The wind had laid to where the smoke of our campfire was ...We bolted barefooted into the darkness

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I crept up on our stack of driftwood and silently built up the fire to where it looked like we were getting ready to execute a witch. Sparks and embers crackled up in the air and started to fall back around our bedrolls, and the glare was so bright we had a hard time seeing anything outside the ring of light. I knew that this wasn't real smart if something was out there in the dark, but it sure made me feel safer. Now that we could see one another's faces clearly it seemed all right to talk out loud. Jack talked first.

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"Fuck you. I'll make the coffee and you check the tide."

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We could see the skiff's moonlighted anchor rope running from a dark gouge in the sand into the twisting and rolling tide. Without breaking our frantic run we dove into the black water in the direction pointed out by the anchor line.

As we blasted to the surface, flaying, kicking and blowing air, the hull of the skiff loomed up ten feet from us, slowly twisting and bobbing in the moving moonlight.

I made it over the bow so fast I didn't get any water on the outside of the hull. Jack was a stroke behind and had to grab the anchor rhode to keep from being swept past the boat by the tide. Two yanks and a half-twisted lunge brought him aboard less than a second later. One turn and two quick steps later he was winding and he unling on the engine's statter ope.

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After we made the turn above the Cedar Lakes into the fresh water stretch of the river, Jack idled down and said that we had to make up a story to explain why we were coming home in the middle of the night, wet and barefooted without any of our gear. I suggested that we tie up to a tree on the bank and wait until daylight and go back for it. Jack stated, in no uncertain terms, that he was spending the rest of the night inside a house.

As we slow-motored back up river, we regained a semblance of our manhood and tried to calmly discuss whatever it was that we heard. We agreed that it didn't sound

anything like some noise of nature that could be explained away by blaming the wind, heat expansion, the tide or waves or an animal. It didn't sound man-made, either. While it might have been made by some device using amplified high pitch vibrations, there wasn't

any explaining how it seemed to be coming from all 32 points of the compass at the same time as it covered us up or where and why that kind of equipment would be set up out here in the middle of nowhere. Nobody would go to all that trouble just to scare two anonymous fishermen. We agreed that whatever it was had to be something horrible beyond description to instantly and simultaneously strike fear in the hearts of two indomitable and fearless men such as we. Hell, I was an ex-Marine reservist and jack had done a short kiddy-cruise hitch in the Navy. We weren't hombres to be taken light or scare easily by anything mortal.

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Nemo

By Lida Broadhurst

Captain, see us: angry dreamers Who smother our hopes in death like roses Drowning in blood, Then seek new urns to shatter.

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We teach thin curses like tentacles For those who nourish dreams or mourn them.

For only one thought spirals in our minds, Spins from the webbing of our tongues:

Peace and free dreams, we clamor. Gift us with that, god-head.

But the glass remains mute under silent skies.

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DEATH'S DOOR

Magazine Reviews by Andrea Locke



CEMETERY DANCE Vol 5, Iss/ue #2. PO Box 858, Edgewood, MD 21040. Editor: Richard Chizmar. 8.5" x 11". 104 pages, \$4.00.

CEMETERY DANCE USUALLY impresses me more with its non-fiction than fiction, because its focus is more on mystery/suspense than horror, be it psychological, supernatural, erotic, cyber, or what have you. If not for a few token tales of terror. I'd think CD would want to market itself to the mystery crowd. Except, when it comes to the features, which appear courtesy of such popular horrorists as Monteleone, Lansdale (who has also turned most of his talents into the suspense/drama/ superhero field), Costello, Winter, Ptacek, Sammon, and others. The columns are consistently entertaining and informative, though I think Trash Theatre, the Lansdale/David Webb article is probably more Webb than Lansdale, as Joe's humor doesn't typically fall so flat.

The fiction for the most part is well-rendered, I must say, especially the honest-to-god vampire story, Blood Feud, by Lawrence Watt-Evans: a very traditional, somewhat predictable but unabashedly fun piece, inexplicably but effectively told in present tense. Darrell Schweitzer: s The Lion's Mouth is a nice dark fantasy, and Augustine Bruins Funnell's The Pig Man earns top marks as a highly effective tale of terror.

I didn't care for Samuel Wil-

sone's Reduction in Staff, a pedestrian tale with an all-too-inevitable climax. Its only redeeming feature is that it plays on the real-world anxiety of today's economy with some success. And Ed Gorman's Deathman, which is gorgeously written, isn't a story, it's nothing more than a character sketch, effective in its own right, but feels like a mere piece of something bigger. I searched all through the magazine for the conclusion of the story, quite unsuccessfully.

CEMETERY DANCE may not always have the run the most pleasing fiction I've ever seen, but it has loads of integrity and pretty good production values, especially the color cover. This one features a well-known, but striking Alan Clark painting, and ought to work wonders for drawing readers browsing the Barnes & Noble bookshelves.



CYBER-PSYCHO'S A.O.D. Issue #4. PO Box 581, Denver, CO 80201. Editor: Jasmine Sailing. 8.5" x 11". 58 pages. \$4.00.

CYBER-PSYCHOS A.O.D. reminds me of my high school days when I was working for the school paper. My big scoop was my 1980 interview with Evelyn "Champagne" King, who was playing in our gym for the Christmas dance. Sheer adrenaline pumped through my little Junior body when I asked such hard, forceful questions such as "Why

are you called 'Champagne'?" and 'Is it true that you are dating your road manager?" This type of interview drags CPAOD down a long way from what it could be. The interviews with G. X. Jupiter-Larson of the Haters, Type O Negative and Scfahead epitomize classic Porky's high school culture.

The big slap in the face comes when you actually get to a good interview. By the time I read the t. Winter-Damon and Lucy Taylor interviews, which were good, though nothing beyond the expected, my mouth was already tainted with that bile/Pepto-Bismol taste I had at the local StellarCon after Mark Rainey, my esteemed and somewhat demented editor, made me drink one too many of his Pink Moose Missiles.

Mr. t. had a few interesting things to say. He hinted at the upcoming Dark New Age of spirituality and transcybergnostic SF. I think his point was that the future is darker than we think no matter how much we recycle or prosecute daycare sex offenders. He goes on to discuss the Age of Serial Killers and how they are not an accidental by-product of the Third Wave, but are a logical outgrowth of The New Flesh-they are the Nexuses of Power, whirlwinds of resurgent atavistic fury whose energies are harnessed by adepts and acolytes. and refocused to exponentially increase. At least Evelyn simply said, "Because I made bubbles when I was a baby."

Most of the departments were scattered and lacked a central theme. Some of the stories involved such things as penis dissections on live patients, yet they have a PETA ad in this issue, I am wondering if that was for comic relief. And why are we dating our publication by using the names of Wiccan Religious Holidays-Beltane/June 1993 in this case. Just what does "All Meat SF" have to do with Deep Ecologists, Tree Hugging Goddess Worshipers, or Celtic Witches?

Other chunks of CPAOD were made up by a collage of genre fiction. The first bit in issue four was by Kurt

Newton. His work On the Anniversary...of J.F.K. was about a mad scientist that stole JFK's brain and had it interfaced into a sort of viewer. And in the same tired Ouinn Martin Production style of drama, the scientist watched the assassination over and over again. You would think that the Zabrudder film would have satisfied him.

Jeffrey A. Stadt proves, with his short horror story Closed Casket, that gay bashing continues even after death. Angels and Demons alike can't wait to kick the ol' sodomite around. The Artist, the Jacie Marsh erotica tale, was actually quite good, although it didn't seem to fit the scope of what Jasmine Sailing was trying to achieve with CPAOD.

The Wrong Guy by Edward Lee was the only other high point in this issue. This well-crafted story was about two sociopathic women who were out seeking revenge on men for all the rancid things that they have done to women since the beginning of time. Wendlyn and Rena use all sorts of devices on the men they handcuff to their brass bed; tin snips, ice pick, motor oil, knitting needles, power tools, and a boiling bacon grease enema. Of course, the main reason I like it is that I fantasize about Wendlyn and Rena finding my ex-husband and performing Coca-cola blood transfusions.

There is nothing like revenge and a pair of rusty rectum retractors.

DARK REGIONS Vol. 2, Issue #1. PO Box 6301, Concord, CA 94524. Editors: Joe Morey, John Rosenmann, 5.5" x 8.5", 104 pages, \$3.95.

DARK REGIONS HAS a very appealing look about it, with a 3-color cover by Alfred Klosterman and anthologystyled, laser-printed contents. Repro quality is good, and my only real quibble with the visual quality is with Klosterman's art; he illustrated all the stories, and while he does manage from time to time to do an exceptional piece of work, he seems to manage with almost lunar regularity to choose the most unremarkable scenes to illustrate. And his characters remind me of Norman Rockwell's: more than competently rendered, but always caught with expressions so goofy as inspire nausea.

As I started reading, I noted how each story started out with an excellent premise but suffered from amateurish prose and unsteady plotting. Black Ice by Mike Olson and Fear No Evil by John Rosenman--two basically capable authors--could have been superior tales with a bit more polish. Especially the latter, which opens in top form with a stellar phenomenon reminiscent of Bradbury or even Lovecraft, but the mystery of the thing that emerges is spoiled by flashes into the "thing's" point of view; so much more effective if the author would allow what happens to the characters to define the motivation of the horror in the well. As is, the mystery is destroyed, and instead of being frightening, the whole premise seems a bit silly



I read the first two paragraphs of Leah Sorenson's The Spinner, then skipped to the end to see if what I anticipated would come to pass; it did. Then I read the middle. Nice enough premise, and decent storytelling, but seeing the end so early has really made me come to despise circular plotting.

The shining moment of DARK REGIONS comes with Marilyn K. Martin's Graffiti, a pro-quality tale with a beautifully-told, larger than life premise that finally made me sit up and take notice, David Bruce 's Monkey Barr was a wee bit less-inspired, but also quite well done, and helped make reading this issue worth my time and then

We end with a neat enough short piece by Jeanette Hopper entitled The Bleeding Muse, which makes me wonder whatever has become of Ms. Hopper in recent days, as well as her nasty little pub GAS



FRED CHAPPELL--THE LODGER. Necronomicon Press, 101 Lockwood St. West Warwick, RI 02893. 7" x 8.5", 28 pages. \$4.50.

FRED CHAPPELL IS not primarily known as a horror author, although he did win the World Fantasy Award last year for Best Short Story. It is his mainstream work, which, by the way, usually does possess some element of fantasy. that has gained the most widespread acclaim, and in college literature classes, his name may often be mentioned in the same breath as William Faulkner. Flannery O'Connor and even Franz Kafka. (I've also been made aware that he is very popular in France, right up there with Jerry Lewis.) But Mr. Chanpell's affinity for what we know as the horror genre shows up in many of his tales, and this novelette, published as a chapbook by Necronomicon Press, is evidence that the author knows how to deliver a dark thrill with the best of the "horrorists" while maintaining an uncompromising literary approach, not to mention one hell of a sense of humor.

"The Lodger" is the ghost of a long-dead poet who takes up residence inside the mind and body of a modern day poet wannabe who discovers a book of the dead man's poems. During his reading, he learns that the initial letters

(Continued on page 63)





By Rex Miller

N THE BEGINNING the darkness was without form and void, but in the void there was something in the deepest darkness.

The earth was without form and void, and darkness was also upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of the Lord, moving over the face of the waters, moved into the blackness and saw it was without form.

But in the void lurked invisible vapors; ammonia, water, methane, nitrogen, factor X.

And God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters," and the dry land Earth gathered together in the heart of the blackness.

And God said, "Let there be light upon the firmament of the heavens," and a cosmic sea of stellar gas swirled through the velvet ink of the universe to become at one with the forces of nature, gravitational force, electromagnetic energy, the nuclear core and the radioactive half life...and these cosmogonic powers saw that it was good.

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures," and a violent storm suddenly blasted apart this dark, primeval mist with a massive bolt of lightning that triggered an astrochemical reaction creating the first organic molecules; and out of these came the birds and the great sea monsters and every living creature.

God saw something then out in the inky darkness, deep in the blackest pocket of formless void, where the forces of nature swirled in powerful whirlyools far beyond the firmament, and God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sir, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

"Then the Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.' "And he caused the man he had created to fall into a deep sleep, and while he slept he took one of his ribs. And he took the rib and made a woman.

But there was a serpent in the garden. And this serpent whispered to the woman made from the man's rib, that man and woman might eat of the fruit of a certain tree, saying, "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

But whence come this serpent? And how was he to know of such a thing as evil?

In the darkness, the black soul of infinity, the dark heart of eternity, the inky core of the formless, limitless universe, the thing was always there.

It was there in the void, lurking in the swirl of invisible vapors; ammonia, water, methane, nitrogen.

It was factor X. And when God said "Let there be light," and a cosmic sea of stellar gas became at one with the forces of nature, the cosmogonic powers that were God took the swirling, invisible, primeval mist and shattered it with one massive bolt of lightning.

And in the colliding galaxies of creation there was energy. It produced storm. Storm made rain. Molecules of water vapor rained down through space, changing, metamorphosing, transforming as they rained through cloud, heat, pressure; raining down into the seas.

Millennia passed like seconds. Random chemical interreactions coalesced, interfaced, fused.

Simple organic molecules grew, changed billions of times, transformed over and over, fusing the interstellar chemistry.

They moved with the tide, cooking in the ultraviolet solar oven, heading inland toward the dry land, moving up in the tidal accretion.

They evolved. Evolving into great sea monsters, winged birds, every living thing. Man. Woman. Scrpent. DNA stepping stones that were precursors of life came moving towards the firmament of Earth.

Out of the swampy soup of pre-history came dark, alien things that grew, changed, transformed, fused into organic molecules that created living progenitors. Even then, factor X was there, this thing that came from the darkest core of evil.

It was there in the one who went away from the presence to dwell in the land of Nod, east of Eden. There in the gate of Sodom, and in Gomor 'rah. In Australopithceus. In the apelike Home habilus of East Africa and in the humanoid Homo erectus: traces of it evolved into all the tribes and forms of pre-man. Traces of factor X.

It was at the heart of the blackest darkness, and at the core of the deepest soul, lurking, surviving, through the replication of matter and the transformations of the evolutionary chain.

The evidence of this trace was handed down through the earliest tribal memories predating the first hieroglyphs; in defied ruins, on atrophied papyri and crumbling terra cotta. In inexplicable cult emblems and impenetrable sacraments. Immutable dogma and ancient ritual.

The evidence exists in antiquity's liturgical mysteries, chiseled into the touchstones of every religious philosophy, passed down through monotheists and mysterions, mystics and mystigogues, aetheists and agnostics, mythologized and anthropomorphicized, named, worshiped, cursed, loved, hated, spurned, embraced, feared, desired, escaped, evoked.

It is defined as the "left hand of the Holy One," a "quality whose name is evil," "sitra ahra" (the other side), a "domain of dark emanations and demonic powers," the "emanation of the left," the "3 dark emanations," the force of evil, the "11 names," the "destructive potency," the power of evil, the "11 names, "the "destructive potency," the power of evil, the "yezer ha-ra" (evil instinct), cosmic evil, Samael, "the dark realm," the impurity, the kernel of evil, the light which did not contain thought, the heart of darkness.

The concept of factor X survived the Aristotelian and

Platonic-emanist viewpoints, Arabic and Christian demonology, kabbalistic and folk beliefs, Chinese and Slavic cultures alike. The impurity of the serpent slithered through the demonology of succubi and incubi, the demons of ancient Egypt and the devils of the Zohar, Beliar of the Apocalypse, nukba di-tehoma rabba, Astaroth, Beelzebuh, Ammon of No, 4-fingered thumbless devils, devils from cold, demons in waste places, demons of darkness, transforming, changing, fusing, dripping through the semen of demonic sex, the menstrual blood of the female devils falling into the water, poisoning prince, dragon, reptile, flowing through the bloodstream of time.

Traces of factor X spawned Vlad the Impaler, Genghis Khan who sat upon a throne of 100,000 skulls in the Black Desert, Attila the rapine Hun, Shicklegruber, Stalin, many others whose names are unknown.

Traces penetrated the intracellular molecular particles of the smallest parasites, sometimes crystallizable, with a central core of nucleic acid and an outer cover of protein; invading host bodies, infecting susceptible cells and--always-transformine, changing, evolvine, fusine.

The traces of factor X spread via respiratory and enteric excretions, fusing, changing, unpredictable, formless, at once chemoprophylactic-immune and zoonotic, extrahuman, paranormal. Virulent beyond anything known, evolving and building in intensity, incubating, growing.

Factor X began to seck host-carriers, penetrating and altering the intracellular structure of chronic degenerative diseases, fusing, creating strains of evil with no known etiology; ubzuma, kuru, subacute sclerosing panancephalitis, progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy, vixellanon, Creutzfeldt-Jakob, progressive rubella encephalitis, others with unknown names.

The first time the traces were given a name was in 1961 AD, in a New Zealand laboratory. Chemical analysis of a "monkey" gland yielded the strange, bizarre, inexplicable breakdown of: gamma-aminobutyric acid, vivazon, pyridoxine kinase, mannavira, serotinin, "phenothiazone" (which was later learned to be a typographical error for phenothiazine), ammonia, methane, nitrogen, water, and a curious amalgam of syntheses and derivatives termed "X"-unknown substance.

Much later it was also learned that the analysis had not been of a monkey gland. The gland was that of a human. It showed peculiar atrophy and fasciculations. Signs of basal ganglia distortion, dystonic posturing, and other unexplained tangential epidemiologic signs of host invasion were present. TEST W-series bioautoclaving of the extensor plantars revealed minute, toxicological stigmata similar to that found in autopsies on cadavers with VX, SARIN, and Z-N compound traces present.

The human had died of several things. For want of a better clinical umbrella title, they decided that his death was caused by "factor X:" which was characterized by a CT brain scan showing pneumoencephalographic attack and cerebellar atrophy, Low-voltage "brain burst" syndrome. Rapidly progressive dementia. Myoclonic seizures. Spongiform

disorganization and astrocytic proliferation of the brain tissue. Additionally, the decedent had manifested pathological emotional responses, severe deubtius, hypostatic pneumonia, astrocytic proliferation, chronic degeneration of the CNS, Kaposi's sarcoma, and-X.

It took forensic chemists and pathologists nearly 20 years of back-tracking X to find the host-invader, tracing penetration of host bodies through hundreds of cases of infection, often diagnosed as "a rare skin cancer." Commonalities of patients produced computerized demographic likelihoods--the rare cancer was being spread by drug addicts, homosexuals, X-carriers. They gave the unstoppable new T-lymphotrophic Immunodeficiency Virus III to thousands, who in turn spread it to tens of thousands carriers. Today, factor X is alive and well, multiplying, evolving, becoming more and more virulent as it changes, transforms, fuses, grows. It is known by a different name but it is the lethal semen of demonic sex, the dripping blood of the junk devil, poisoning prince, dragon, reptile, flowing through the bloodstream of time.



Chaingang

"LIKE JAMES ELROY, Jim Thompson and Andrew Vachss, Rex Miller has turned the mystery novel inside out with unflinching focus on the seamy, the sordid, and the pathological. Miller is the most uninhibited of the group... typically writing stripped-down, brutal prose...obviously influenced by Hemingway."

> --Paul M. Sammon (essay Outlaws in SPLATTER-PUNKS: EXTREME HORROR.

"TERRIFYING AND ORIGINAL...a writer who is able to bring the dynamite in both hands ...almost too terrifying to be read ...but is too compelling to put down."

"Stephen King,

in praise of SLOB.
"CHAINGANG SHOWS US that there is a little monster in

every human, and a little human in every monster. We haven't seen writing this strong and jarring since 'he late Jim Thompson at his best.

--Ray Garton,

controversial author of LIVE GIRLS, CRUCIFAX, and DARK CHANNEL. OKES. It's got muscle it hasn't even tried

"SLOB REALLY SMOKES. It's got muscle it hasn't even tried yet. It's the place where old John D. used to work before Travis McGee got winded. Cain and Dutch Leonard and Jim Thompson and Jim Tully sing in these pages. Caniff's rhythm and smart talk, Hemingway's mean, Alfie Bester's cinematography. It pulls the plow, this writing."

--Harlan Ellison

HE CLOSER YOU get to the ever-controversial writer Rex Miller, the more the feeling overwhelms you that you're treading the killing fields of a literary dangerzone, nearing the eye of a creative cyclone ever unpredictable, ever shifting into new permutations....

Just in case you just woke up from longterm deeptanked CRYOFREEZE...or maybe a fortyyear coma, & you think Mickey Spillane's 1, THE JURY is stil SOTA stuff, or that Dirty Harry's still the baddest ass around, since 1987, when SLOB, his first published novel hit the streets with both barrels smokin', garnered a finalist status with HWA's Stoker Awards, rave cover blurbs from a host of genre luminaries & reviews that gushed all over it or slammed it into the back court, Killer Rex Miller has been kickin' down the doors, takin' no prisoners & raising a firestorm of controversy in his wake...

SLOB, FRENZY, STONE SHADOW, SLICE, ICEMAN, PROFANE MEN &, now, CHAINGANG--his novels shatter

the preconceived boundaries between horror, crime, hardboiled detective, & techno-thriller, driving those marketing guys at the publishing houses apeshit, trying to pigeonhole what "segment" to target with neat little labels. But Miller's seething talent defies those limpdick, normic categories, while his patented jazzriff/jive hip/flip prose style in-your-face narrative voice & brutal & explicit Hellseages of mindwrenching mayhem deliver a knockout one-two punch to the brainpan, he is equally adept at seguing into scenes of poignant, tear-jerking tenderness, tales of understated, "quiet" horror & "drawing room" mystery, or of evoking the pleasant pangs of nostaliga when conjuring up America's lost days of innocence, & those "theatres of the mind," the radio serials, with the so-easy dichotomics of Good vs. Evil-

Rex is a resident of the somewhat unlikely locale of East Prairie, Missouri, where he not only hammers out some of the most cutting-edge books around, but also operates his "Golden Age" nostalgia business, specializing in character collectibles & media memorabilia, which has supplied numerous noteworthies & 'reg'lar folks with goodies since 1971. Born 25 April, 1993, Rex is, arguably, "the oldes living Splatterpunk." But he's far more than that-to those of us privileged to call him "friend," he's universally regarded as one tough guy with a heart of pure gold, with a devastatingly encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture trivia, &, when not dealing with the very serious nature of his personal cause celebre, he's one furny dude, a bit like Wolfman Jack meets Don Rickles & Robin Williams.

As for the creative cyclone:

"92 saw a number of major events. Publication by Pocket Star Books in November of his 7th published novel, the much-acclaimed CHAINGANG, which "sold through" almost immediately. The sale & release of dozens of new short stories & novellas, as well as non-fiction articles & another non-fic book, humorous vignettes, & other pieces of writing. Collaborative projects with another very well-known hardboiled detective writer, Andrew Vachss. A change of agents, after his long association with mega-agent Richard Curtis. &, after numerous earlier overtures by the film industry, Rex Miller's character Chaingang is on the threshold of beine optioned for film!

1:

tW-D: Rex, can you give us any insider info on some of those earlier offers you refused, & more importantly, details about the cinematic debut of Daniel Edward Flowers Bunkowski? Or is this new deal still pretty hush-hush?...?

Rex: Until I sign a centract, there's no deal, & I haven't signed anything as we speak. Without reflecting on any ongoing negotiations, we were offered a \$10,000/\$150,000 production deal by a theatrical producer in '87, which we declined. I would not give my character away then & I still won't. If people want a development deal for cable, a theatrical deal based on the character only, or just a straight option of a book, I'm open and I'm not unreasonable. I do want fair compensation-it's that simple.

Tw-D: Although Miller's books are perhaps the most

entertaining novels to emerge in years within the hardboiled/crime/horror arena, Rex will tell you flat out, "I'm not really writing for someone's entertainment!" Then, what is he up to? Hell, let's get to it & ASK the Killer Man, himself...

Rex. what do you mean you're not writing to entertain? Rex: The short stories, sure, I'm playing with my dick & stuff, but the books are basically a message. 2 things: IF YOU FUCK WITH KIDS YOU MAKE MONSTERS, & IF YOU ABUSE THE HELPLESS, I HATE YOU! I suppose I'm trying to get rid of the poison...I'm not sure if that's as strong a message as I'd like to send. THAT'S WHY I POUND OUT IN-YOUR FACE NOVELS.

Of course, I want to be liked and admired same as anyone else, but maybe this is suspended when I'm writing. IW-D: I know a lot of your longitine fans will be shocked to learn you've parted ways with your now-former agent Richard Curtis. You were friends for some years, now, & he's very successfully represented you for the 6-book deal with NAL (5 books in the Jack Eichord series + your actual 1st book, the decidedly bizarre Vietnam saga, PROFANE MEN) as well as your 3-book deal with Pocket Star Books-what prompted the change in representation, & who is agenting you now?

Rex: I was repped successfully--as you point out--by Richard Curtis, & consider him both a friend & a brilliant teacher. I left because of his constant whining about the Pentecostal Church, Ever since he converted he's been intolerable on that one issue, incessantly lecturing writers about the advantages of the Pentecostal faith. He's reached the point now where he's only taking on Pentecostal writers & any day now, I fully expect to hear that Janet Daley has begun speaking in tongues. I wish you hadn't brought up this ugliness...are you happy now, Damon? Seriously, though, I only left because sometimes you need a fresh roll of the dice. I was fortunate in having several well-respected agents who had expressed interest in my work, & I chose Martha Kaplan, a former editor at Knopf who had been Executive Editor of THE NEW YORKER, & had formed the Martha Kaplan Agency.

tW-D: Does she happen to be Pentecostal?

Rex: Only in the broad cultural sense.

Kex: Only in the broad cultural sense.

tW-D: With sales of your books nearing the million-copy mark, Rex, your novels have been picked up in several foreign markets for reprint. Could you give us a rundown on the details?

Rex: Sure, there's Pan Horror in the UK, Bastei Lubbe in Germany, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore & most recently Telemaco in Italy, & Kobunsha in Japan. Tal is marketing ICEMAN through Baziat in Russia—I understand he's offering it for 500 Rubles & an antique KGB nutcracket.

tW-D: Novel-wise, '92 saw the release of CHAINGANG, switching publishing houses from NAL (who published your first onvels) to Pocket Books, as their lead book for November-yet another blockbuster saga of your now-legendary character Chaingang, Daniel Edward Flowers Bunkowski). What other books can we expect to see forthcomine?

Rex: SAVANT, scheduled for '94, with BUTCHER to follow, and I'm working on a new CHAINGANG book.

tW-D: Have most of your books gone through a change of title prior to publication?

Rex: The early books did. SLOB was the one exception. PROFANE MEN was originally K-I-L-L, FRENZY was RAMPAGE, & STONE SHADOW was VIPER, aka THE WAY OF THE VIPER.

tW-D; Millermaniacs will recall THE WAY OF THE VIPER was a totally mindblown concept espoused by confessed serial slayer Ukie Hackabee, as he spilled his philosophy to detective Jack Eichord in the book. Rex, will we be seeing anything similar to that eidetic floodgate stuff in any future Miller projects?

Rex: A short story called 5 has some of that feel to it, that will be in the Tor superhero anthology that Kurt Busiek & Lawrence Watt-Evans are co-editing, I've just finished a piece called Prayers of the Predator -- a Chaingang short--that sold to John Maclay's VOICES FROM THE NIGHT. There's a taste of that also in isolated set pieces in some of my forthcoming books.

tW-D: A number of friends have mentioned they were a bit confused on what happened to Chaingang between the finale of SLICE & the events that take place in your latest novel, CHAINGANG. Can you give us any clues?

Rex: I really can't because it would give away the plot to an upcoming story. Kowloon is one of my personal favorites among the Chaingang stories. I wrote it long ago, & at one time considered doing it as a stand-alone chapbook, but due to the hiatus of my publishing schedule when I moved from NAL to Pocket, the story will be out of sequence when it comes out. It's the 20,000-word novella that explains the missing components of the Chaingang-

Eichord connection, Kowloon links the end of the novel SLICE with Chaingang's reemergence, & reveals the secret bond between Eichord & Bunkowski. It 'll be the lead novella in Rich Chizmar's first THRILLERS anthology, which features 4 20,000 word pieces, to be published by CD Books. Joe Lansdale does the foreward, with other novellas by Chet Williamson, Nancy Collins & Ardath Mayhar.

tW-D: Speaking of short fiction, Rex, can you give us a quick rundown on some of the anthologies & magazines where your fans can find pieces they may have missed?

Rex: Blood Drive, in Marty Greenberg's DRACULA: PRINCE OF DARKNESS, for DAW Books. The Prick of Thorn, in the first volume of Pete Crowther's hardbound NARROW HOUSES anthology series, from Little, Brown & Co., England. Sikeston, MO, in HWA's FREAKSHOW anthology, edited by F. Paul Wilson, & released in paper from Pocket Books & in deluxe, limited edition hardbound from Borderlands Press. American Cyclo in MIDNIGHT GRAFFITI #7, Fall '92 issue. I have some pieces in all of Jeff Gelb's anthologies, including The Voice in HOT BLOOD, Surprise in HOTTER BLOOD & The Shock Rock Jock in the soon-to-be published sequel SHOCK ROCK 2. Sewercide in Warner Books' forthcoming FEAR ITSELF, I've Got Hugh Under My Skin in DAW's FRANKENSTEIN, to be out later this year, edited by Ed Gorman & Marty Greenberg.

tW-D: Bunky in SHOCK ROCK was picked up for graphic novelization, right, Rex?

Rex: Right. Chris Lacher & Marc Paoletti are going to reprint it in their SYSTEM SHOCK series. A portion of the proceeds are supposed to be donated to abused kids, so I was especially glad to contribute one of my stories.

tW-D: Rex, I know how important the subject of child abuse is to you. Many of your readers may not be aware, except for the brief mention in my intro, but this common cause has helped bring you together with another very well-known, hardboiled crime writer, whom you've been a fan of for years--Mr. Ice himself, Andrew Vachss! Your styles are, indeed, quite different, suggesting references to your collaboration as the team of "Fire

& Ice," but your shared concern for abused kids more than bridges any stylistic differences. Would you be willing to tell us all a bit concerning how that came about, what kind of projects you 2 have been involved in, & where to look for these sure-to-be collectors' items?

Rex: All right. First you have to understand that Vachss hobby is writing, his work centers around a law practice limited to children & vouth. He lectures & writes extensively on the subject of abused children & probably understands as much about such matters as any clinician. More so in that he's street real.

While his enemy may be the predatory pedophile, he's not looking for vengeance,

which he terms only a "by-product." He's got a more important agenda: Vachss is a protector, dedicated to helping victims.

He's been in the field for years. A stint for the World Health Organization in Biafra; heading a maximum security program for juveniles; the man's done it all. As an attorney, he's been involved in landmark court cases incuding--in one case--an unborn baby's rights. He's been described as having "the soul of the warrior & the heart of a poet," & if you doubt the accuracy of that just read ANOTHER CHANCE TO GET IT RIGHT, a different kind of children's book for adults, from Dark Horse Books (\$14.95, Dark Horse Publishing, 10956 SE Main, Milwaukie, OR 97222. Add \$2.50 shipping. RECOMMENDED! It's truth pure as haiku, from an extraordinary talent.

Andrew's gospel is simple & clearly stated & restated: "today's victim is tomorrow's predator." Because we think alike we came together -- at least on that one subject. By dumb luck I'd reached the same reached the same conclusions academically--through book research--that he'd arrived at firsthand. We both found it astonishing that nowhere in the



Diagnostical Statistical Manuals, the continually revised Bibles of the psychiatric comraunity did the word "evil" appear. His definition that "evil is choice" works for me. The omission in the DSMs is at the heart of my serial killer, Chaingang Bunkowski, & the manner in which he is perceived by "Dr. Norman" (the clinical establishment). In CROSSOVER, the book I just finished with Andrew and James Colbert, we've had a chance to mutually explore some of the darker corners of a human mutant, a flower of evil nutrured by choice.

Society has a secret assembly line going. It begins in very complex ways, but volitional sexual sadism & abuse often starts in the home--not just blue collar homes or welfare homes, or where career recidivists have returned--but under the roofs of high school principals, Scoutmasters, day care center proprietors, ministers, preachers, athletic coacheseverywhere. The laws are weak. Judges? Jessus in heaven! Surely we must have the worst crop of dunderheads in modern history. Nothing pleases some judges more than putting a tortured, molested child right back in the home where he or she was abused. Society's, or the bureaucracy's, concept of protection is to beef up immunization or Head Start. Vaches is one of the few persons who has rational & workable solutions for making things better, so his voice is important.

tW-D: I know all your fans, & those of Andrew Vachss-you know I for one am a big fan of both your work-will want to be sure not to miss out on the meeting of "Fire & Ice."

Rex, would you like to mention some other places your fans can find your published short fiction?

Rex: The Cereal Killer, in Max Allan Collins & Marty Greenberg's DICK TRACY, THE SECRET FILES, is kind of an offbeat piece which makes use of my longstanding interest in radio premium collectibles & trivia. Dead Issue, in the BORDERLANDS 2 antho is, in contrast, a very brutal, inyour-face look at wife-beating, psychological spousal abuse, etc.; it's available either in ppbd. from Avon, or in a deluxe, signed hdbd. edition from Borderlands Press. The Lincoln-Kennedy Conspiracy &: Non-Skid Jacks * The DC-Saigon Connection both appeared in Ed Gorman & Marty Greenberg's SOLVED hdbd. anthology from Carroll & Graf; the former story is a collab with Dr. Fred L. King. The Luckiest Man in the World, from J. N. Williamson's MASQUES III deluxe hdbd. (St. Martins Press), is another Chaingang piece. It's been selected for reprint in Ed Gorman's DARK CRIMES II, from Dark Harvest Press. Miss December is a Jack Eichord vignette that appeared in the very successful STALKERS antho that Ed Gorman & Marty Greenberg also did. Without doubt, the grossest thing I've ever written, Reunion Moon -- that one appeared in Paul Sammon's SPLATTERPUNKS anthology. Spike Jones & Rev. Sister Claudine, a collab with well-known MIDNIGHT GRAFFITI editor Jessie Horsting, appeared in the MIDNIGHT GRAFFIT anthology from Warner Books.

tW-D: This seems like a good place to do an unabashed plug for the very special chapbook you helped me put together for your fans, forthcoming soon from TAL Publications, REX MILLER: THE COMPLETE REVELATIONS. This book contains, among many other goodies, the most complete bibliography of your work ever compiled-dozens & dozens of stories, vignettes, humorous articles—& includes publishers, original prices & dates of publication, mini-reviews & selected excerpts from quite a few of your stories, & not only includes already published works, but the titles of upcoming stories & where they're scheduled to appear... We'll give you some additional details, later on in this program.

Rex: (in trademark, ultra-suave basso profundo voiceover, hearkening back to those tube-warmed days of yesteryear): Just tear the top off your mailman & send it in today!

tW-D: Rex, obviously most, if not all of the folks reading this are already fans of your writing. I'll bet they'd be interested in knowing who you like to read...SNAP QUIZ: If you were to name a half dozen or so of your favorite authors?:

Rex: Not counting Shakespeare & Joyce & those cats? If we're talking about contemporary fiction I'd go with the guys who are the most realistic, the tough crime writers such as Vachss, Izzi, Leonard, Higgins, & so forth. Oh, yeah, &, of course, Thomas Harris-every ball the man hits goes out of the park.

tW-D: Favorite books?

Rex: SUTTREE by Cormack McCarthy. FIELD OF BLOOD by Gerald Seymour. All the "Burke" novels. Guy Davenport's EVERY FORCE EVOLVES A FORM-amazing essays & lectures. Richard Bissell's river books. Le Carre's Smiley novels. HUMAN FACTOR. You start a list like this & there's no ending. Immediately a Doctorow or Levin or Puzo comes to mind.

tW-D: How about folks in the Horror genre per se...?

Rex Easy. That ol'asskickin' Nacogdoches, Texas farmboy hisself, I.O.E. LA.N.S.D.A.L.E. All bullshit aside, & I've said this before, when I first read some of Joe's books, they knocked me right into the wastebasket. He's totally his own bad self, with the best Twain, Harry Crews, Edwin Shrake, & Richard Bissell in there somewhere, too. Must be a crowded sumbitch inside his haid, I-bone. Whatchat hink? Like King he's an absolutely natural storyteller. I'd hardly classify them as horror writers, by the way, just because the genre accepts them. Master troubadours. Tough & funny, too.

tW-D: Sounds like someone else I ve been talking with-eh, Rex...? & from his inside-cover quote for CHAINGANG, talking about \$LOB, I take it loe's a fan of your work, too: "Raw as a sucking wound, mean as a snake, cold as the inside of a meat freezer...Rex Miller is a major new writer with a unique, personal vision."

Rex: Everything a person needs to know about Joe Lansdale is in the introduction to the CD hardcover reprint of ACT OF LOVE.

tW-D: You're often compared to such legendary writers as Thomas Hartis, Jim Thompson & Ernest Hemingway. You've already mentioned your enthusiasm for the work of Thomas Hartis, but you haven't mentioned Thompson or Hemingway. Have you read much of their work? If so, can you mention any favorite books or stories by them, & do you have a preference for their novels or their shorter fiction? Are your impressions at the comparison of your works to theirs favorable? Do you feel any conscious influence from these sources?

Rex I 've read nearly everything they 've written, J believe, or at least a sufficient amount of each man to know I 'm not in their respective literary leagues. I don't take comparisons too seriously. My goal was to be as non-derivative a writer as I could, but I certainly am influenced by all the authors you've named, to varying degrees. And I feel influenced by military histories. too.

The Beats also had a major influence on my perceptions. I read all of Burroughs' early stuff, his William Lee-pseudonym stuff, JUNKIE: CONFESSIONS OF AN UNREDEEMED DRUG ADDICT, the bits & pieces that would later become his groundbreaking experimental novel, NAKED LUNCH, THE SOFT MACHINE, etc.

(W-D: Rex, if you hadn't 'fessed up to being a Burroughs fanatic, at least at some point, l'âve thought you were trying to stip one over on oil' Dr. D-mented here. Your own work, your textual stream-of-consciousness segues, your total conviction to taking the reader all the way down into the dark-cor confessional of the human heart, exposing the corruption & the abusers & the pain without apology, reminds me, in the very positive literary & moral sense with WSB's works. What Norman Mailer said in defense of NAKED LUNCH at Burrough's obscenity trial for same comes to mind:

"Just as Hieronymous Bosch set down the most diabolical & blood-curdling details with the delicacy of line & a Puckish humor which left one with a sense of the mansions of horor attendant upon Hell, so, too, does Burroughs leave you with an intimate, detailed vision of what Hell must be like..." "...Nowhere, as in NAKED LUNCH's collection of monsters, half-mad geniuses, cripples, mountebanks, criminals, perverts, & putrifying beasts is there such a modern panoply of the vanities of the human will, of excesses of evil which occur when the idea of personal or intellectual power reigns superior to the comparisons of the flesh.

We are richer for that record."

Hell, Rex, he could have been describing any of your books.

Rex: Burroughs' voice is uniquely powerful. I was impressed with many of the writers & artists who came out of that movement. I read Kerouac's Mexico City Blues in manuscript, at the New City Lights Bookstore in Houston. Greg Corso, Larry Ferlinghetti & Kenny Rexroth were interesting cats who created some powerful work. The wordstream & ferocity of images prefigured Ellison, or echoed him, perhaps—the same fierce honesty, the forward rush of his narrative, the uncompromisingly razor-sharp insights.

tW-D: Say, Rex, I know someone I thought you'd mention for sure: a name Paul Sammon invoked when comparing your writing...What do you think of James Ellroy?

Rev. He's swell

tW-D: What about KILLER ON THE ROAD?

Rex: Wonderful. Riders on the Storm, too. I loved the Doors. But I've read memorable Ellroy. The--er--um--what's it called--the "colostomy?" THE BLACK DAHLIA, THE BIG NOTHING. No. Really. I'm crazy about some of his work. The shorter things especially. BLOOD ON THE MOON. Seminal suff.

tW-D; Let me make a quick aside, a verbal notation, here, for anybody out there who's unfamiliar with Ellroy's books. Originally titled, SILENT TERROR, it's been rereleased and repackaged with the new handle, tho' the freakin' inside of the book still reads SILENT TERROR on every damn right-hand page heading. Talk about bizarre marketing! &, although I'm a big personal fan of his noir nuances & ultra-hardboiled crime narrative (NO, NOT AS HARDBOILED AS REX, OKAY? NOW, WILL YA QUIT ELBOWING ME IN THE GUT, REX?), the much-touted KILLER ON THE ROAD aka SILENT TERROR was, I believe, his first novel--& it shows. After reading all of Rex's books & short stories, & all of Andrew Vachss' books, then I would suggest trying Ellroy's linked period-piece "quintology"--CLANDESTINE, THE BLACK DAHLIA, THE BIG NOWHERE, LA CONFIDENTIAL, & WHITE JAZZ--set in a very gritty Lala Land of the '40s & '50s yesteryear...& his Det. Sergeant Lloyd Hopkins novels-BLOOD ON THE MOON (filmed as COP, with James Woods--yeah, I'm a BIG Woods fan--this my second fave role of his, after consciousness-slipping sleazoid Max Renn in Cronenberg's mindwarping cult classic VIDEODROME...), BECAUSE THE NIGHT, SUICIDE HILL--& BROWN'S

REQUIEM.

Rex: You call that a quick aside? You sounded for a moment like you wanted to have Ellroy's baby, & also--whose freakin' interview is this, darn it? Let me level with you: I've toathed that putz since I learned he was the Howling Dog of Death. I wanted to be the Howling Dog of Death, & dammit this means I have to settle for the Great Big Woofing Puppy of the Terminally Sick. (I wonder if I could say I was the Barking Bard of Bibliotic Bale? Nah.) But, seriously, a fine writer, and a credit to his race--the fucking KLINGONS, all

tW-D: Hmm. Either this is a SEVERE case of deja-va, or else you saw the same cable special I did-what was it? the Raymond Chandler retrospective...?-the one Ellroy hosted (keeerist, & I thought I dreamed that one, man!), where he came on like the "Prancing Pipsqueak of Pussydom," a good buddy of mine termed him.

Rex: Well, the way he was runnin' that limping jailhouse shuck, you kinda wanted to take that little turkey & rip his ugly melon off & shove his stump through the nearest sheetrock...

tW-D: Yeah, & for my dime, Mr. Crime, Rex IS the Howling Helldog. Rex, one final question; then I'll let you get back to your work. Murdering & maining & whatever...Much of your writing has been described as "over-the-edge." It could be said that you're actually writing at the reader, in some instances, rather than for him. How would you asswer that?

Rex: Absolutely. I want the reader scared, jolted, angrywhatever. I want that reaction, whether it's revulsion or fear I want that person to understand that if you take children and fuck them, torture them, hurt and terrorize them, it doesn't ever go away. You make a Chaingamg that way, & one night he'll come & find you, in your old age, or someone else, & do worse than you ever thought of. We're creating monsters all the time: Humans—by definition—capable of acts more monstrous than any writer has yet put on paper. It's about victims. I want to get you pissed about those supercilious assholes who torture arimals to perfect cosmetics. I want you sickened by the notion that a judge will take a kid who has been sodomized repeatedly, & — how many times a day does this happen? — put that poor child right back in the same

environment. I want you mad that we have the worst collection of judges in the history of the judicial system. I want to leave you shaken, worried, concerned enough so that maybe the next time you see something happen in your city, or hear about an incident recounted on the evening news that the cumulative effect will be to push you over the edge, &galvanize you into action.

tW-D: Rex, thank you very much for sharing your time & insights with us; I know I've had a ball rappin' with you! & keep up the great work!

CHAINGANGTM is a trademark of Rex Miller.

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The WHAT THE HELL WAS THIS DOING IN THE EDITOR'S SLUSHPILE Dept...

CERMIS

By Earl Douchette

UCK YOU, YOU monkey turd," said Bilge with a slimey leer. He buried the meat cleaver halfway into the table for effect. "That's gonna cost you two fingers and a big toe."

Massengill didn't t even wince. The muscles in his armsent ropey with tension. Bilge waved the meat cleaver above his head; the thin, purplish lips parted slightly, exposing yellowed, pointy teeth. He wavered a moment, only a moment, while he wiped a blob of mayonnaise from his stubbled chin.

A geyser of blood gushed from Massengill's hand, as his separated fingers plunked to the floor. Bilge grunted like a copulating bull, and raised the cleaver once again. Whack! Whack! One less toe on Massengill's right foot.

"You fuckin' dick cheese," growled Massengill.
"This game's not over yet." He shuffled the deck with his intact hand.

As the cards slapped on the table, Bilge shifted nervously in his chair. God, it was hard to get comfortable since he lost his left buttock in the last hand. He squinted at the cards he'd been dealt. His face grew crimson, then fire-engine red. "Fuck! Shift Damn! Hell!" he bellowed. "You're trying to cheat me, you maggoty bastard!"

Massengill staggered to his feet, trying to compensate for the missing bottom half of one of his legs. He stuck his finger up his swinelike nose and dug out something which faintly resembled the inside of a

grape. "For fuck's sake, that hand was straight, Mr. Colostomy Bag."

"Like fuck it was! Gimme that cleaver! I'll shave your fuckin' nose."

Suddenly the door flew open and a putrefying stench filled the air. Both Bilge and Massengill gagged. The room darkened with green fumes, fumes which emanated from the walking behemoth who had entered the room, the behemoth otherwise known as B. O. Sumo. Large, hairy breasts dangled from his bare chest, down onto the rolls of his protruding belly. His hands, the size of colossal mayonnaise jars, were balled into fists.

"Damn you muther fuckers," he yelled. "Can't a fella get any sleep around here? I knew how to shut you up!"

His scythe swung with lethal precision, right and left, then right and left again. When it was over, Bilge wallowed on the floor making ach-ach noises, his esophagus completely laid open. Massengill lay in the corner, where he'd been flung by the force of the scythe's blow. His fibrillating heart was exposed to view, and squirmed like a nest of worms.

B. O. stood still, surveying his handiwork, until the room was quiet, and the mutilated bodies no longer thrashed or twitched. An uneasiness grew in the pit of his stomach, an uneasiness he knew would hinder his sleeping. This he couldn't tolerate. "Diet or no," he grumbled, "Ain't nobody gonna stop me. I am gonna have me a mayonnaise sandwich."

Suita Witch

FORBIDDEN TEXTS BOOK REVIEWS

ONCE AROUND THE BLOCH By Robert Bloch Tor Books, June 1993 \$22.95, 406 pp.



ROBERT BLOCH IS one of the most highly regarded names in the field of horror fiction. He has toiled for many years and enjoyed much success. From the salad days of WEIRD TALES to instant fame-by-association with PSYCHO and the ups-and-downs which followed, Bloch has led a fascinating life. Now he has put it all down on paper in his self-proclaimed "unauthorized "autobiography.

Born a midwesth grew up during the

erner of German Jewish parentage, Bloch grew up during the depths of the depression. Much of the book's early chapters deal with his childhood, various relatives and friends and what life was like in those days. Fate led him to his future vocation when an aunt offered to buy him any item on a magazine rack. Bloch chose an issue of WEIRD TALES. The decision led Bloch to endeavor as a horror writer forever more.

The next big event of his formative years was his correspondence with H. P. Lovecraft. Bloch, along with several others, was fascinated by Lovecraft's stories. Lovecraft began to encourage the then-sixteen-year-old Bloch, imitating the Lovecraft style, dashed off a few stories and sent them to his mentor. Lovecraft would make corrections and suggestions and send them back. When Bloch sent a story to August Derleth, however, the response was a bit more caustic. Derleth flat-out told him that he would never become a professional writer. Despite this appraisal, Bloch would continue to write and eventually had his first story, Lillies, published for no payment in a rag called MARVEL TALES (not to be confused with any Timely publication).

Lovecraft would eventually use Bloch as the basis of a character named Robert Blake in his short story, *The Haunter of the Dark*. Many other friendships would be born out of Bloch's early days at WEIRD TALES. ONCE AROUND THE BLOCH provides an informative inside look at the camaraderie of fans and pros during the budding vears of horror.

Bloch goes on to describe not only his contributions to the field of horror fiction, but also the work he did in politics and the movies. In politics, he helped to get an incompetent poser elected as mayor of Milwaukee. In movies, he would build on the instant infamy of PSVCHO and continue on to work with the likes of William Castle, Joan Crawford, Jack Webb, Boris Karloff, and productions of ALFRED HITCH-COCK PRESENTS, TWILIGHT ZONE, THRILLER, and much more throughout the '60s and '70s.

The voluminous details of his career are faithfully documented and an index is included, but it is obvious Bloch feels that the many varied friends he has made over the years are of far more importance. In fact, Bloch tends to hurry by the dry facts to get to his favorite tales of meeting with famous authors and stars. At times the name dropping becomes overwhelming in the amount, which only serves to emphasize Bloch's congenial personality and personable approach to all the things he loves.

Robert Bloch has certainly earned his place among the masters of horror. His life story should be enjoyed by all. It is entertainingly told and spiced with his wry wit. Read and enjoy his memoirs now, for with his inevitable passing we will have lost one of the greatest writers of horror.

--Randy Johnston

THE KEEPER By Robert D. Lee Pinnacle Books, June 1993 \$4.50, 222 pp.



IN A PREDICTABLE manner, THE KEEPER opens with two couples setting up a campsite in the woods. They decide to cool off in a nearby stream. After splashing around a bit, one couple slips off to quench their earthly desires. Following their cue, the other couple does the same. Couple #2, now satiated, returns to camp to begin dinner. Time passes and they begin to wonder where couple #1 are. The man goes to check it out. Time passes and the woman wonders where the man is. She grabs a lantern and begins her own search. Unfortunately for the woman, it would be the killer who got the others who would find her first.

Hans Von Ziegler lives in the seclusion of his long-dead parents' mansion. He has become a recluse since the violent death of his parents in a lion-taming accident. The townspeople of Ruttenburg never bother Hans or question his ways. No one suspects Hans of being remotely connected to the recent disappearances in the area. Jim and Lawrence Sweeny, the town's police force, chalk up the missing persons reports to young folks just doing what comes natural-leaving Ruttenburg.

Judy McAuliffe has big plans. She is saving money from her job tending bar at the Stony Creek Rathskeller in hopes of driving off on her Harley-Davidson to hitch up with the circus down in Florida. Most of the patrons humor her, but she knows what she wants and arrives at a way to accomplish it.

Judy hears the tale of Hans and his circus past and goes to his overgrown estate to ask for guidance. Hans greets her in the yard, offers lemonade and proceeds to converse in a shy manner. He tells her of his brother Horst, an aggressive person who is usually away on business. Horst was a lion tamer, she is informed. Judy asks for a meeting, which Hans does not believe is wise. She takes her leave when Hans complains of a sudden headache.

Later, Judy receives a call from Horst inviting her back for a peek at his new act. Thoroughly thrilled, Judy returns to the decrepit home. Hans meets her at the door and invites her in. He leaves her alone in the heavily draped living room. A sound like a wild animal 's scream comes from below. Then Horst makes his appearance. He is in full costume, including shiny black boots and bullwhip. They talk briefly before the screams start up again. Horst excuses himself and stomps down into the basement.

Curiosity gets the better of Judy and she sneaks down into the basement. She finds an enormous stone vault with many chambers branching off. Passing several circus wagons, Judy stops to peer inside one. Her mind reels at the sight of a young woman, on hands and knees, devouring food from a small bowl. She runs from eage to eage, looking for answers, but finding only more chained women.

In a state of total panie, Judy bolts up the stairs and out of the house. Her cycle is gone, so she runs into the surrounding woods. Charging through the brush, she stumbles across one of Horst's traps and falls into an inescapably deep pit. Before long, Horst arrives and retrieves her. Now, with a collar and leash secured, Horst leads Judy to her own private cage.

Horst has big plans, as well. He is developing a new act for his return to the circus. Trained women which obey his every command would be the trick. And Judy is his Felidia, the prize of the pack.

Needless to say, THE KEEPER wins no points for originality in theme or characterization. I recall a movie titled BARN OF THE NAKED DEAD (1973) which featured the

story of a crazed man seeking women for his lion taming act. Perhaps THE KEEPER has a bit more depth--but not much. The main players, Judy, Horst and Hans, are mere cardboard cutouts with little attempt made to elevate them beyond their sketched-out existence.

The plot travels inexorably from its derivative opening to the inevitable showdown between the master and his slaves. There are brief excursions into sex and gore (like what is in the bowls of soup the captives are fed), but nothing terribly shocking to horror-jaded readers. The whole proceedings play as though it was intended for the simple-minded. Unsophisticated structure, pasteboard characters facile plot, and short playing time added up to little enjoyment for me. Maybe the short playing time was a plus....

After scanning the copyright page, I would hazard a guess that "Robert D. Lee" may actually be Mary Ann Donahue and Robert Dereck Steeley.

--Randy Johnston



WEIRD FAMILY TALES By Ken Wisman Prime Earth Productions PO Box 29127 Parma OH 44129 June 1993, \$3.75, 70 pp.

KEN WISMAN'S WEIRD FAMILY TALES is a good read I've read a number of Wisman's stories scattered in places from the small press to WEIRD TALES, and already had a positive view of his abilities as a writer. And, while this book is a good one, I

can't help but feel that it could have been better.

The concept of the supernatural (or "weird") family is an old form in fantasy fiction. In pop culture we have The Addams Family, but Bradbury probably did it best with his scattering of stories from his younger days. So, it's not a new idea, and I'd hoped Wisman would breathe some innovation into these seven tales.

What the reader gets is tradition. In this case, there's absolutely nothing wrong with that; but I could not get over the feeling that some good editorial advice might have made this package much better. Ah, well.

The seven stories here are glued together by the presence of the engimatic figure whose sole purpose in life is to travel about, seeking to solve the supernatural woes of his family. He is brother, nephew, cousin to the subjects of each of the stories present in this volume. At times, he is quite active in the solving—as in the case of Sisys Nin-or merely an observer, as he is in Brother Endle. Aside from the fact that

(Continued on page 62)



Howling By Robert Rhine

HEY LIVED UP in the Chesapeake Mountains where the snow was deep, winters brutal. After a particularly severe blizzard, which dumped a record was the river rock smokestack and a telltale wisp of white snoke.

Ben had been snowed in for twelve days and his food rations were down to three Ritz crackers, a can of Crisco and a jar of jalapenos--the killer kind that made your eyes burn and sweat beads burst out on your forehead.

Ben, a burly logger with tree-trunk biceps and heavy red beard, had fallen on hard times long before the blizzard. But he wasn't alone. It seened that a white spotted owl had put two hundred loggers out of work. Ben would have liked to frieassee that dumb bird, with a cream sauce of "environmentalist." But they were "protected." Ben feared the logger would be the next on the endangered species list. Then he

would be "protected."

Ben felt his stomach chewing on itself and sliced a sliver of jalapeno with his hunting knife. He noticed Buck staring and offered him a piece. But Buck wouldn't touch the stuff. Made him sneeze.

Buck was half timber wolf, half German shepherd with jet black fur, a thick white mane and eyes like a forest fire. Buck had been the biggest puppy Ben had ever laid eyes on. Paws like horse hoofs and a mouth full of calcium stalactites that could crush bone. The old Zuni woman who bred wolves with domestics assured Ben he was tame as a kitten. But Ben knew better. Kittens could grow to be mountain lions and breeding was tricky stuff. You had to water down the killer without making them weak.

Buck grew into his feet by the following spring and his muscular back rose nearly to Ben's wast. The gangly pup would teethe on pine cones, snapping them in two in a bite and Ben sensed that Buck's institutes for survival were as strong as ever. Now, trapped with dwindling food and lousy prospects, Buck had begun to stare with hungry eyes...and Ben thought about those teeth.

Ben closed his eyes from the hound's unnerving stare and listened to the fire crackle, feeling the warmth on his face. He thought back to the winter chariot races where wolf dogs pulled homemade chariots of timber. Ben and Buck's team was christened "Ben Hur" and after three straight wins they had become legend up in the mountains. The next year was a different story. Frank LeGrand brought his gray wolf, Shadow. Though slightly smaller than Buck, Shadow was fast as lightning and one hundred percent timber wolf. Ben knew it would be a race.

The contestants, nine men and two women, waited unsmilling on the starting line. Some deep in thought, trancelike, others offering last minute words of encouragement to their dogs.

The starter pistol sounded and the dogs surged into the snow towing their one-man sleds behind. LeGrand got a slow start, cut off by a Siberian Husky, but Buck quickly got out ahead of the pack just where Ben planned. By the second mile, Shadow hit his stride, weaving through the pack like a slalom. LeGrand spotted Ben and worked Shadow up behind their sled. LeGrand held back a length behind Ben's sled, in the air pocket. They stayed like that for five miles.

With the finish line a quarter mile ahead, Shadow pulled alongside of Buck and LeGrand flashed a toothy smile, Ben noticing that he could use some dental work. They were still neck and neck when they spotted the finish line ahead. Ben whipped fire into Buck's eyes, who needed little encouragement as he dug his powerful paws into the snow.

A yard away from the finish line, LeGrand pulled out his secret weapon, a three foot long cattle prod. He gave Shadow a single jolt on the haunches and Shadow surged ahead, beating Buck by a nose.

Frank LeGrand proudly held the trophy cup overhead, with pats on the back as Buck's breath burst from his nostrils like a steam engine.

Ben was tilting beers afterwards at Willie's Watering Hole when he heard the ruckus outside. Snarling wolves, snapping teeth and the howl of death. Ben shivered as he ran outside without his jacket, shivering with an icy premonition.

Frank LeGrand fell on his knees beside Shadow. Blood was sprayed on the snow like spin art and Shadow's so fleeck was ripped clean out. "Looks like a badger attack," Willie the bartender said. But it soon became clear from the steaming blood on Buck's muzzle who had done the dirty work.

Frank screamed that Buck should be destroyed. "There's something about that dog that ain't right." But Ben said it was Frank's fault for leaving his dog chaimed so close to Buck. A circle of men gathered around, shouting drunken encouragements, egging them on. Frank threw the first punch and Ben was glad because it gave him sportsmanlike reasons to flatten Frank with a right hook as Buck watched...wagging his tail.

A piece of birch bark cracked like a blackjack

firecracker, jarring Ben from his memories and sending a spray of sparks over Buck. Ben noticed that Buck had moved closer to the fire, his unrelenting stare giving Ben the shivers. "Need another log," Ben whispered. But Buck was

"Nect another log," Ben winspered. But Bluck was guarding the fireplace and Ben didn't want to disturb him. "Not now. Better save the wood for later," he added out loud, wondering if there would actually be a later.

It was deathly quiet in the cabin. Ben could almost feel the weight of the snow on the cabin, smothering him, pushing on his lungs, a vise tightening on his chest. The clock over the mantel tick-tocked...tick-tocked...with agonizing slowness as minutes melted. The fireplace was new just a pile of angry embers as the clock was suddenly hurled against the wall, shattering into pieces.

Ben rubbed his fatigued eyes, drugged by the fire's hypnotic dance. When he looked up, the clock was still on the mantel--tick-tocking...tick-tocking.... Buck still staring.

He shook off the stare competition with Buck and decided to start reading his book over from the beginning again. Call of the Wild.

Buck's savage eyes soon grew weary and he dropped off to doggy dreamland. Though beckoned by exhaustion himself, Ben feared that Buck was just pretending to be asleep and was waiting for him to shut his eyes. A trick to lull him to sleep and then go for the jugular. Meanwhile, Buck's snoring, whether real or fake, grew more and more annoying. Ben could actually feel his own exhalations being sucked into the wolf dog's snorting black nostrils; there was precious little air left to share.

An arctic whisper blew down the chimney and Ben inhaled a deep breath of sweet pine air before Buck stole it all

Then, the wind died.

The cabin creaked with arthritis and Ben heard a rattle at the back door. Someone was breaking in! But that was impossible; they were ten feet under the snow. Unless...unless...they were being rescued! Well, it was about time. He had been fearing that all the reighbors were dead by now. Their chimneys stuffed with snow clots cutting off their last gasps of breath.

The doorknob rattled again. Maybe there were looters outside waiting to pick him clean like vultures on a rotting carcass. Well, these looters would have a surprise in store. If Buck didn't tear them to shreds, he had the "ole Pacifier" over the firepface.

Ben glanced at his twin barrel shotgun above the mantel. To get to it he would have to step over Buck. He gently placed his book on the arm rest and, walking heel to toe, silently approached the wolf dog. The floorboards creaked. Buck stopped snoring. Ben froze.

It seemed like an eternity until Buck started snoring again. When he was certain Buck was asleep, Ben gingerly stepped one foot over the furry beast. His fingertips could just barely touch the butt of the rifle. He raised his other leg over Buck realizing he was in a rather precarious position, one leg stretched over Buck, leaving his manhood hovering like a meaty treat for his starving wolf pet.

The clock tick-tocked...tick-tocked in rhythm with Ben's pounding heart...totally terrified of Buck who slowly opened one piercing, red eye.

A low growl began somewhere in Buck's kidney's and rose up his esophagus to a throaty earthquake. Buck's black nose pleated back like an accordion. His dark lips lifted a curtain call over his gargantuan canines and a thick thread of droof flowed over his gums, puddling on the rag rug.

Ben's fingers desperately grasped for the shotgun. If he

ROBERT RHINE

could get control of the weapon, he planned to aim straight down and give Buck both barrels in the head, putting the beast out of its misery. He imagined at this range the impact would be terrific, scattering bone and brain tissue everwhere.

Suddenly, as if Buck read his mind, and with blinding speed, the beast leapt up, clamped Ben's crotch in his canines like a vicious moray eel, and bit through the crotch of his Levis with the sound of a snapping pine cone.

Ben lurched up in bed, perspiring, soaked in fear beneath his cozy down comforter. Moonlight crept through the torn curtains. Perhaps it had all been a dream, like in a bad B-movie.

Ben dabbed the spittle that had leaked from his lips during sleep and studied the wetness. It was purple in the moonlight. Ben realized that the snow had melted below the top of the window. He reached up, placing his palm against the cold glass, feeling the moonlight through the pane. For a moment, the weight of the snow lifted. But, as he pulled his hand from the glass, he noticed an ominously dark handprint. He involuntarily gulped as he wiped his hand on the comforter leaving shadowy smudges. Ben suddenly recalled the movie The Godfather, which he had watched seven times on mountain cable, as he slowly pulled back the covers. Fortunately, nothing unusual awaited him, though his pajamas were drenched as if he had sweat out a fever. For some reason he checked his crotch, which had shriveled with fear, but which was otherwise in rooner order.

Relieved, he stepped off the bed into something sticky,

like molasses. Concerned he desperately tried to whistle for Buck, his mouth stale and dry, but the pitiful sound was drowned by the howling wind. Howling like a wounded animal surrounded by a pack of hyenas.

Ben followed the bloody tributaries along the hardwood. In the living room, the clock had been bashed to pieces, the book's ashes glowing in the fireplace. He noticed that the shotgun was missing from the mantel and dried blood was splattered against the river rock hearth. He immediately crouched into a fighting stance, preparing for the worst. "Who's there?" he shouted; but his voice caught in his throat, making him sound as weak as he felt.

He tiptoed toward the kitchen, cringing at each squeaky plank, anticipating the horror that might greet him.

He wasn't let down. Ben's wail of agony clawed up the chimney and was released into the night. But there was no one to hear him. Only the ice crystals floating and dying.

Buck lay on the kitchen floor, gutted...his insides devoured. The shotgun leaned against the locked back door.

Dazed and nauseous, Ben brushed bloodstained fingertips over his trembling lips as he felt a horrible ache rise from his belly.

> With a twisted, knotted bubble of sorrow and regret... He belched.

> > *****

In the Blackness of Womb

By Doug Coulson

Is the black-winged flamingo Harlot dancers, and ineffable desire.

Alone tonight
Are tracewinds.

Blight, and the Tropic mind.

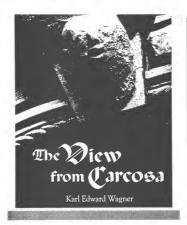
Wandering in night

Loneliness.

Alive at night is my footshoe, the feeling of sedentary reasoning, and sucking quagmire.

Dead tonight is my heartache, anguish, and the pang of terror, and the need to move from where I stand.





All About Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever

HIS COLUMN is a few weeks early, and Mark won't believe his eyes. However, I've just taken my last tetracycline capsule, and I may well be dead by the time you read this. Even now I feel...

It was Sunday, June 13. I was drinking buttermilk with friend and fellow Chapel Hill writer Bruce Hunter, when I happened to notice a petechial rash on my arms that hadn't been there last night. If you're interested in Masonic scerets, check out Bruce's latest book, a hefty hardcover, Beneath the Stone, from Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co., Inc., Richmond, VA 23228. That's all the address they give and they don't list the price on the book, but if you send the old self-addressed stamped envelope, I'll bet they might tell you. If your letter gets there. Maybe their address is also a secret.

Since kindly old Doc Wagner had measles back during the Boer War, he considers his newly acquired rash and tries to suss it out. Let's see. I found a tick on my head yesterday. For about a week I've had flu-like symptoms, joint pain, headaches, fatigue, anorexia. About a week before that I had that place on my neck under the hair that I kept scratching and thought it was just a scabbed over zit... Tick bite, fool. You gotto become a skinhead. And you have just contracted Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

Dragging out all my medical textbooks, I confirmed my diagnosis. Good old Rickettsia rickettsi. Mortality untreated 70%. But, if treated, a mere 3%. I had another glass of buttermilk and phoned my old med school roommate, Jim Groce. Jim is one-third of the Carcosa partnership (David Drake the other third). I no longer practice medicine, but

Groce is always good for a phone-in prescription. I ask for chloramphenicol, but Groce thinks that they no longer make this drug as it caused aplastic anemia. My textbooks are all twenty years old. We decide against a diagnosis of Tsutsugamushi Disease, since I have not been in southeast Asia or Japan, and Groce phones in a prescription for tetracycline, 500 mgm tid X 10 days. Being Sunday evening, the drug stores are all closed. I await the dawn and my fate. Somehow, I lived long enough to get the tetracycline and an armical of vitamins and a few bottles of Jack Daniels to wash it all down. One of the very many warning labels on the tetracycline bottle sez don't take the stuff with booze, or food, or iron supplement vitamins. What a buncha kidders. I gave up trying to unlock the adult-proof lid and blew it away with my 44 Charter Arms.

Thus began the long period of convalescence. I was feeling better, but easily fatigued and feverish by afternoon. Dave Drake dropped in with mail and diagnosed my illness as heat rash. Drake knows about as nuch about medicine as I do about chamber music. Bruce Hunter came by and was deeply concerned because I didn't want to go eat barbecue. Jim Groce phoned up to see if I were alive. We were both surprised. I settled down to sleeping and sweating a lot, and since I didn't feel up to writing, I read stories for Year's Bext Horror XXII (not a good idea to cure fever) and dug about through my accumulation of mail. Here's some of the neat stuff.

Some of you may remember actor Jay Gregory from his days as a soap opera villain. I don't watch soaps, but Dennis Etchison, who spends his days watching wrestling, game shows, and soaps, nearly fainted when he met Jay. I think Jay's part had been terminated when he got blown away with a shotgun in the kitchen. Dennis thinks wrestling, game shows, and soaps are real. Anyway. Jay now does lots of voice-overs for commercials, so you've probably heard him. Jay is also a fan of horror/fantasy and used to show up at the World Fantasy Conventions. Jay has now begun an ambitious project of narrating the works of H. P. Lovecraft on audiocassette. Styled The Lovecraft Tapes, Volume I Thing on the Doorstep is now available. Mcst excellent production. This is one of HPL's lesser known stories, perhaps, but one of his first that I read as a teenager, and thus it remains a favorite. Perfect for listening to in the dark, with or without fever. You can order the tape from Jay Gregory at Voice at Work, PO Box 2926, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. I can't find a price on the thing, but if you send the trusty SASE, Jay likely will tell you. And, you'll also get a television star's autograph. With enough support, Jay will continue this project. Cthulhu lives!

Catalogues. I get catalogues. I nust be on every mailing list from New Age to Nuke Your Neighbors. Nothing more fun than to page through catalogues while you crunch your tetracycline and sip JD. One of the best out there is from Cold Tonnage Books, run by Andy Richards of 136 New Road, Bedfont, Feltham, Middlesex. TW14 8HT, England. Andy sends out chunky catalogues of rare, used, and in-print science fiction/fantasy and horror books—many of them not available in the States—at very reasonable prices. Andy often

includes worthwhile comments on the books. This is a must-have for serious book collectors.

Moving right along to the outrageous, I read my new catalogue from Mutilat on Graphics. At cons, admirers have often asked me where I get my tasteful collection of T-shirts. Others are busily phoning hotel security. Well, look no farther, fellow psycho-purks! Mutilation Graphics has ton Gr's that 'Il get you tossed out of any publisher's party. These dudes are well gonzo. Catalogue comes with "POST-AL WARNING! Material within is considered offensive and is NOT for minors! Nobody is twisting your arm to read it, so throw it away if you want." And you just gotta love dudes who start off with announcing: "We've been getting lots of requests for different types of garments with our lousy images on them, so in order to serve you little fuckers better, we now offer the following:" Hey! Correct use of colon, and they didn't split the infinitive. Pure class.

The T's (they prefer "tees" but we all know what a tease is) are mostly on your choice of 50/50 or cotton, and damn good value sez Wagner. Lots of schlock horror films,

radically gross stuff, and totally off the wall T-shirts. Also other crucial junk. Like videocassettes of those films they showed us in high school of mangled teenagers crushed in horrible car wrecks. A real laff riot! No splatterpunk should be without this catalogue. It'll set you back only one buck from Mutilation Graphics, 3765 Oriole Ct., Shrub Oak, NY 10588. If not for yourself, do it for those who love you.

Come Saturday, June 19 yer man Wagner is very bored with being sick and decides to drive up to Hillsborough with Bruce Hunter for their annual Hog Day festival and eat barbecue. Bruce shows up at 9 AM. Bruce

was once filmed by hidden camera eating 47 barbecue sandwiches-for breakfast. It got up to 90 by noon, and Bruce is concerned that Doc Wagner hasn't eaten his second sandwich. Bruce fetches a fresh cold lemonade so I can finish off my vodka. Feeling very rocky, I manage to steer my '67 Mustang back home. Jim Groce then drops in to see if I'm alive. I think he still has doubts. Dr. Wagner and Dr. Groce confer. We examine my rash. We agree that neither of us has ever seen a case of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, but this sure looks like a duck and quacks like a duck. Groce see that North Carolina leads the nation in cases of Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and that it ought to be renamed Smoky Mountain Spotted Fever. David Drake reminds me that his mother died of the disease last year in Tennessee. I

Much improved, I eat my second sandwich, then decide to sort through a year's worth of unanswered mail and stuff stacked beside my cozy chair. First I discarded most of the outdated pizza coupons and all of the unpaid credit card bills. Beneath a layer of cat fur were lots of letters I really do mean to answer real soon now, along with bits of junk

mail and odds that I hadn't thrown out for some reason upon opening. And thus I found my forgotten treasure for this column. Just when you thought Mutilation Graphics was weird. Then came Corset Digest.

A few years back there was an outfit (in Atlanta, I think) called Van's Vintage Clothing that sold women's undergarments from about the 1800s up to the 1960s. Rad catalogues, mostly one-of-a-kind garments. Place went out of business owing to poor sales and dwindling supplies. Shoulda used a time machine. So. Yer man Wagner sees their ad in a Betty Page fanzine (I only bought it for the articles), gets catalogue, orders some turn-of-the-century frillies for his lady (she looked smashing)--and gets on another mailing list. Result: Doc Wagner becomes proud owner of Corset Digest, Volume 1, Number 1, July 1992. This will go great in my pulp collection. It will also be rare inasmuch as it is the only small press publication I have read in three years that lacks a story by D. F. Lewis. Get after them, Des.

Well, Corset Digest ran to six pages with their first issue, but they ran a short bit on Diana Rigg's corseted appear-

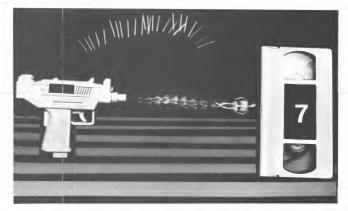
ance in the Touch of Brimstone episode of THE AVENGERS, which I watch several times each day, and for which reason I'd save the fledgling 'zine. I thought it was a joke at first, but they seem serious; anyone asking \$20 (made out to eash) for a tenissue subscription can't be kidding. One assumes subsequent issues were more ambitious. You gotta support a 'zine with the motto: cingulum strictus-vita bomm. They promise news and reviews of constricting garments, as well as classified ads, interviews, articles, and tips on where to find those foundations. I don't know if this is still being published, but you might query still being published, but you might query

them (with that good old SASE) at CD, Dept. 174, 4514
Chamblee-Dunwoody Rd, Atlanta, GA 30338. This might be
of interest to costumers or anyone who just likes to dress,
Me, I burned my bra and my draft card back in the '60s, but
make sure I'm on the judges' panel next con if you show
up dressed like Emma Peel. Or Betty Pael.

Now then, this should get you onto lots of mailing lists and into lots of mischief, which is what I m here for. Friend of mine, John Rieber, once used my address to order lots of kung fu/deadly weapons/survivalist catalogues, due to the fact that he hadn't the price of a post office box nor a fixed abode. A plethora of such catalogues arrived over succeeding months for John--and a letter from the Re-elect Ronald Reagan Fund Drive. Hmmm...

Finished the tetracycline yesterday. Fever came back last night. Took Advil and JD. Keep seeing visions of Gibson girls in corsets. I know now that I should never have read that horror-jetlested copy of The King in Yellow. I should never have looked up The Yellow Sign. I think I am dying, I wish the priest would—

DEATHREALM/47



David By Sean Doolittle

AVID FIRST SAW him on the bus. Not the 6:05 crosstown; that was just it. He'd gone straight to Nabob's after work and had already come up with a table (fireside, of course; he would finally get the fireplace tonight of all nights) when Christina had called the restaurant, apologized a blue streak and scampered off to OR to clean up after the appendix-bomb that had gone off in some poor kid's abdomen twenty minutes earlier. Not having the spirit to engage in any real meaningful battle over a cab, David hopped aboard the seven-twenty, which was loading on the corner just as he left the restaurant.

The guy was one seat up and across the aisle. He glanced back once early on, then again, a light in his smoky gray eyes that David recognized as a particular kind of uncertainty. I know you, I think. Do I know you? A youngish guy, maybe a little younger than David himself. Late twenties. Dark hair and soft features, a day's worth of stubble, and besides looking only vaguely like the guy David had seen on a Grape-Nuts commercial, completely unfamiliar. When he looked back the third time, David decided to give him the nod-that polite and general one that covers those situations where eye contact has been made with a stranger and something seems like it should be done. Then he unfolded the evening edition he'd grabbed from the machine outside Nabob's and turned to the comies.

The guy looked back again right around 34th and Warburton, Started to stare.

By the mid-fifties, it was time for another decision. Look up? He toyed briefly with the idea of screaming What? into the guy's face, decided ultimately to give social eues another chance and stay with the comics. Try to look really engrossed. See man, I'm reading. I'm reading so hard that I don't even notice you.

They pulled up to the stop, a six-block stroll from his apartment building, ten minutes later. The guy watched him all the way off the bus.

IKE'S WAS ON the corner, and after getting off the bus, David looked at his watch, saw that it wasn't even eight, and decided to duck in for a beer. It turned out to be Karaoke night inside, as luck would have it. He downed a Heineken and made it out just as a middle-aged couple in matching sweaters began bellowing Unchained Melody, staring drunkenly into each other's eyes and holding the mike between them.

He was pressing the button at the crosswalk when a voice just behind him said, "Hi." David turned and saw the Grape-Nuts guy from the bus looking at him intently.

"Hi," he said, and realized he was pushing the button repeatedly. He made himself stop.

The guy continued to watch him, saying nothing. David glanced at him again. He was wearing a sweater, fraying but bulky, Jeans. Sneakers. The night was cool enough that David could see vague tendrils of breath whispering from the corner of his mouth.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Do I know you?"

The guy_kept looking at him, expression pleasant, deep gray eyes revealing nothing. Just interest. David looked back and then, with a mental slap to the forehead, thought, Christ, I'm being picked up here. He almost smiled. "I saw you on the bus." The guy gave a small smile, as if in explanation.

David just nodded, slowly. The way you nod to someone telling you about the poltergeist in their laundry room. "I... yeah. I noticed that."

The guy nodded back and they just stood there, nodding at each other, two people who don't share the same language giving each other directions.

The light was what saved the moment. It turned, and David gave a final nod and started across the street. The guy came right along with him. When they hit the other curb and David turned right, heading up in the direction of his apartment, the guy didn't miss a stride.

David gave a sigh of exasperation and stopped dead in his tracks. "Look, can I help you with something?"

At last, the gray eyes filled with warmth. The guy took a step closer.

"Kill me."

David felt his eyes fly open like window shades and he almost tripped backing up. "What?"

The guy repeated what David thought he had heard. Soft and definite. "Kill me."

David began walking away very quickly. He kept one eye over his shoulder as he did. The guy jumped to catch up.

"Get away from me, man."

"You can do it."

David walked on, increasing his pace. The guy, whose stride was shorter, had to work at it a little. But he kept up. They covered the next block, and David stopped again. He faced the guy and tried to make his voice calm and friendly.

"Look, I'm sure you're a very nice person, but I'm seriously warning you, here. Get. The hell. Away. From me."

The guy just blinked and kept staring with that maddeningly passive gaze. Well, I'd like to, really. But I can't do that. How come? Because I'm a raving fucking psychotic, see?

David shook his head and started on again, and when the guy stuck with him for another block, he said, "Don't make me break your goddamn nose, okay? Just leave."

The guy put a gentle hand on his shoulder. David shrugged it off like it was something with maggots.

"Don't break my nose. Break my spine. Kill me. You can." He locked his gaze on hard, and the next time he said it he was whispering. "Kill me."

David heard sharp footsteps up the block, their echo clock-clocking in and out of the alleyway between Fritz's and The Golden Carrot, Beat cop.

Thank you, God.

"Officer," he shouted. "This man is bothering me."

The cop turned, cocked his head, and began walking in their direction. David felt himself cringe.

Beautiful. How very damsel-in-distress of you, Dave. The cop strolled up, eyebrow suspiciously arched. At

him. That was when David noticed that the guy had gone.

Again. Beautiful.

"What's that?" The cop looked to his right, then to his

left, all around them. A heavy-handed little piece of sarcasm, David thought, if ever there was one.

"Nothing. Never mind. Thanks," he said, and walked on quickly, feeling the cop watch him all the way to the next block before the hollow clock-clocking started up again.

David caught himself looking back every second or two, realized he was watching his back for the Grape-Nuts guy.

I'm sure somebody'll kill you, sport, he thought, then prayed as he reached the front steps of his building at last that there would be some aspirin. Weirdness gave him a headache

.

THERE WERE NO aspirin, as if he couldn't have guessed that, but there was a single, lonely Heineken in the fridge, which he uncapped and took with him to the shower. He cranked the thing into Nearly Unbearable, closed the door and let the place fill with steam, stood under the spray, setting the head on massage and letting it bombard his forehead, the back of his, neck. He stayed until the water began cooling in incremental shades.

Worked, by God. And the beer hit the spot well enough that he decided to throw on jeans and a sweatshirt, hop down the block to Sammy's for another sic. Saturday tomorrow, and if he was forced to spend Friday night Christinaless, might as well assemble himself in from: of the tube and buzz the evening happily away. He made it back in roughly eight minutes, had popcorn ready in ten, and plopped into the sofa group, with blankets and pillows, in twenty minutes flat.

He had three dead soldiers and nothing but unpopped kernels in the bowl when he heard a key snick in the

doorknob. Letterman was just getting underway.

In a few moments, Christina drug herself through the

door and leaned back heavily against it. Her sandy hair was hanging into her eyes, and it looked like she could pack for a weekend in the bags under her eyes.

"You look like hell," he said.

She smirked at him. "Your hair is thinning."

"Poor baby." He patted the cushion next to him, held open the blankets. She batted her eyes in something like relief and left her coat and purse in a pile by the door. He wrapped his arms around her shoulders and let her snuggle in. He smelled her hair, kissed the back of her head. "How's the kid?"

She yawned. "Still groggy, lucky for him. He's gonna hurt."

"How're you?"

She craned her head around and kissed him. "Exhausted, Sorry about dinner."

"No sweat whatever, Beer?"

She already had one open.

He squeezed her. "I'm glad you came, babe."

Christina wiggled around to face him, wickedness dancing in her eyes. "I haven't yet," she said, kissing him again, "but I thought we could work on it."

David bugged his eyes at her in mock amazement. "I," he said, "am shocked at you. You kiss your mother with that

mouth?"

And that was when he heard the bedroom door open and a small, sleep-drugged voice say, "David? Who are you

talking to, hon?'

David almost launched Christina into the coffee table as he scrambled out of the pit and wheeled around, hitting their freshly popped beers and vaguely hearing them empty into the carpet in glugs. Then he heard Christina gasp.

Grape-Nuts was ambling into the living room, hair mussed, eyes drowsy, scratching the side of his jaw and

vawning. He was wearing David's robe.

"I'm Roy," he said, blinking as if to clear the sleep from his eyes and coming around the couch toward Christina. "I don't think we've met David?"

Christina's lower jaw could not have dropped further without dropping off into the carpet with a dull sort of thud.

What the fuck?

"How did you get in?" he roared. It was the first thing out of his mouth once he remembered how to make words.

The guy winked at him slyly as he sauntered over, patted him on the crotch before David knew what was happening. "I almost asked you the same question earlier, big guy." He looked back at Christina playfully.

She was already heading for the door.

"Jesus, Christina, wait!"

She grabbed her things and opened the door. "Christina, this isn't "

"Look, David " she started, hands up, eyes wide and filled with something like horror, something like disgust. Then she was out. The door slammed

David whirled on the guy, whose face had become passive once again.

"Kill me."

David went for the phone and dialed the police. By the time he'd botched it twice and then managed the first three numbers without missing, Grape-Nuts was coming out of the bathroom once more, dressed. He gave David a last, long look and then left, closing the door softly behind him.

David hung up the phone.

HE SPENT THE next half hour pacing laps around the living room. At one point he picked up one of the empty Heineken bottles and hurled it through the glass top of the coffee table. The sudden realization that he'd just turned a piece of furniture into a billion tiny shards of glass helped him get things together.

He picked up the phone again and called the police. Then he called Christina. The phone rang seventeen times before he heard the other end pick up and drop again.

It was almost one-thirty by the time the guys from the police department knocked on his door. He let them inofficers Swanson and Beutley, hello, I'm David Conners--and he spent the next fifteen minutes recounting everything from the bus ride on. They did their cop thing and left, can't really spare a surveillance unit at this stage but call us immediately if anything else transpires.

David knew that any attempts at sleep tonight would be a washout. So he made coffee, returned to the sofa pit and waited for dawn.

Who in God's earth was this guy?

He's Roy. He wants you to kill him. Haven't we been

Why him, then? How about that. Why, out of all the poor dopes in this lunatic city, did this particular lunatic decide to single him out to make miserable?

David decided, as he sat in the stark glow of the television, sipping his coffee and watching the snow, that next time he saw the guy he'd ask.

WHEN DAYLIGHT AT last began to seep carefully into the city, David showered again. He put away two last cups of French Roast, called for a cab, and was at Christina's by eight.

She was almost packed. Going to her sister's.

He nearly had to staple her down, but in the end, which was almost two hours later, he'd managed to convince her--at least enough to nix the trip to her sister Susan's -- that no, he was not leading a double life, was not having an affair with a psychotic man named Roy, and you can goddamn well bet I called the police. Looked like an episode of Dragnet in my apartment until two-thirty in the morning.

"My God, David," she said, after he threw up his hands and collapsed, thoroughly wrung, into the loveseat. A silent minute passed, and when he lifted the heels of his hands away from his eyeballs, Christina was sitting down beside him. She put a hand to his cheek. "I am so sorry."

He hugged her.

"Are you okay? Has he...done anything?"

"I'm pissed. He hasn't done anything but break into my home and wear my clothes and send you the other direction at warp factor eight."

They broke the clinch, and when she looked up her eyes were wet. "I'm so sorry, David," she said again, and then she shook her head like she couldn't figure out what kind of ungodly sprite had gotten into it. "Not trusting you. I'm pathetic. Just pathetic."

He told her, after they sat down for a few moments, that he didn't cook breakfast for pathetic people, and after they'd eaten she took him shopping.

All, it seemed, was right with the world once more.

They decided he would stay the rest of the weekend at her place. When they returned that evening, loaded with bags and exhausted and happy, she said that this time she would cook, shooed him out and set about it while he ran back to the apartment for clothes, toothbrush, all the rest, A Frito-Lav truck had somehow managed to jackknife in the middle of the intersection at 45th and Boswell. They got to his building in just under an hour. David would remember this, later.

When he opened his door and flipped on the lights, Roy was on the couch, waiting,

He looked him dead on. The guy's face was expressionless, eves intent, "What do you want from me?" he

Well, Roy, I'm not going to kill you, 'kay? If

you want to die, there are plenty of other ways

besides walking up to a stranger and saying

'kill me.' Hell, buy a gun. Jump off a building.

Jump off a building in front of a bus, for all

I care. Just get the hell out of here and don't

said. He slipped his hands into his pockets and leaned against the door, as if to say I'm not budging until you come clean, mister. It struck him how ridiculous it really was. It was his apartment, for God's sake. He decided to hell with it and arched his eyebrows. "Huh!" What is it you want?"

Roy folded his arms. "I've told you, David. I want you to kill me."

"Who are you?"

"I'm Roy."

David just nodded and kicked off the door. "Yeah. Well, Roy, I'm not going to kill you, 'kay? If you want to die, there are plenty of other ways besides walking up to a stranger and saying 'kill me.' Hell, buy a gun. Jump off a building. Jump off a building in front of a bus, for all I care. Just get the hell out of here and don't come back." He smiled at Roy sweetly. Whaddaya say, hum?

Roy did not flinch. He didn't smile or tic or anything. He just looked at him. "I'm asking you, David. You can do it, no matter what you think. Kill me."

What was this? Some deranged philosophy major going around to people? Recognize the Dark Side, stare the Beast in the eye and make friends with it and all that happy horseshir?

"Get out."

"If you want me gone, take the proper steps, David. I've told you. You know how to get rid of me."

"I," David said, "am not. For the last time. Going to kill you." He went for the phone again. At least there was one thing besides death that made the guy leave.

"You will," the guy said, just as the door closed. He tossed something into the carpet before it did, which made a muffled chink as it landed.

come back.

David knew what it was before he even got there. He recognized the miniature tennis shoe.

Christina's keyring. He felt his head go numb as he picked it up, saw the sole of the little sneaker smeared red, pieces of sandy hair stuck in it, the message suckerpunching him and leaving him trying to breathe.

Stepped on her, bro. Kill me.

David remembered calling the police, vaguely remembered mentioning Swanson and Bentley, and he must've called a cab, because one came to pick him up.

That was about all from the next several hours, except for the image of flashing red and running people, that the cops had gotten there before his cab and wouldn't let him see.

DAVID FLEW TO his brother's in Akron the next afternoon. The cops had found the cabby in whose company he'd been when it all went down. There were also strands of hair in his robe and evidence that the lock to his door had been picked, verifying his claim of an intruder. The strands of hair were important in that they, a) weren't his, and, b) matched the ones beneath Christina's fingernails.

After Christina, they took him seriously enough to send him to the airport in a squad car.

The cop waited with him until he boarded.

David threw a last look back as he ducked into the boarding tube. Back, far back beyond the cop and the people waiting in the gate lobby, he could see Roy, leaning up against the Arrivals/Departures kiosk with his hands in his pockets, watching him. His stubble was slightly darker now. He was wearing a long coat.

Then the line swept David along like a leaf in a stream.

IT WOULD BE all over the national news broadcasts for most of the next week, riding out its life on the local stations for longer than that.

But then, when a guy pulls a Miri-14 and three loaded clips out of his coat in the middle of a busy airport, you're gonna have news.

In Akron, David caught it all. CBS to CNN to People to Maury Povich.

Roy burned out two and almost all of the third of his 30 round clips before he fled the airport and screamed off toward the city in a late-model Ford Taurus, hitting downtown just as the sirens kicked in, weaving in and out of traffic, careening through the city with the cops in pursuit. He hit the pedestrians too slow to move, actually made

a point of swerving to do the job on at least two occasions (said an unidentified bystander one night on Hard Copy). Window open, he plugged as many at random with an unlicensed Beretta 9mm before the 15 round clip gave out. He'd been too busy driving, it seemed, to poo in another.

They brought him down at sixty-fifth and Gable. Nobody got more specific than that in terms of location, but David recognized his own address when he saw it.

The trail of bodies led almost to the front steps of his building.

David overheard, one evening, very late, his brother and his wife speaking in the den, tones hushed, voices strained. About calling somebody, Christ, Caroline, I don't know, but I'm worried about him.

When the thing became redundant at last, when they stopped coming up with new stuff (it took a bit, the late-night could milk a thing like this for weeks). David catalogued all the VHS tapes (there were seven) and watched them again.



Judge, Jury, Executioner Chef Salad

By "The Bad Boy of Horror" S. Darnsbrook Colson

HIS TIME THE waitress remembered to bring the bleu cheese dressing on the side. Polo hated it swimming around on top of the salad, oozing down into it in big puddles, leaving some areas of the lettuce soggy and other areas bone dry. He laughed to himself, thinking, sentences will be light today. Yeah, right. Polo poured just a dab of dressing over a sliver of ham, then stabbed it with his fork, skewering a hunk of cheese and a batch of lettuce along with it before opening his hungry mouth. He usually saved the hard boiled eggs until later. Their flavor seemed to give him inspiration, which, late into the meal, he sorely needed as his mind wearied of the day's work.

Across the room, under the hanging variegated philodendron, next to the window, sat a man in a charcoal gray herringbone coat, a light blue shirt, open, no tie, and a pair of the most hideous-looking copper-rimmed glasses he'd ever seen. It was the glasses that drew Polo's eyes. Anybody who wore glasses like that was bound to be guilty-of something. Polo concentrated. The perp spent more time looking under the top hamburger bun than he did biting into it. Two, maybe three peeks. One bite. Hiding something. Definitely hiding something...

His name was Perkins. Jeremy Perkins. Polo couldn't believe what a despicable person he'd discovered. The man had spent most of last night at a bar on M Street, before picking up a hooker around the corner at 15th and L. The floozy in the bar had been turned off by his belching in her face. Any wonder! Even bar flies have some limits. Polo felt himself drifting off on a tangent and brought himself back to the hooker. The hooker, who called herself Kelly, had taken him to her fleabag room near P Street. Jeremy paid her in advance, and when she turned to put the money in her purse, he'd covered her mouth with a cotton gauze pad laced with chloroform. After she'd passed out on the cot, Jeremy had ripped her clothes off, unzipped his pants, pulled out his penis and masturbated until he had emptied himself onto her naked ass. No AIDS for him. As the goo congealed into tapioca, he pulled a bowie knife out of his boot and, without ceremony, stabbed her once, right in the middle of the back. She jerked once, as if she'd had advance notice and had given and early performance of the rigor mortis jump. He left the knife in

As the goo congealed into tapioca, he pulled

a bowie knife out of his boot and, without

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the back. She jerked once, as if she'd had

advance notice and had given an early

performance of the rigor mortis jump....

her, but did spend some time meticulously wiping the blade before he fished his dick back into his pants and departed.

Oyez, oyez, oyez....

Guilty, guilty, guilty.

Ten years in the can. He got that, and more. It turned out that Kelly's pimp had friends in the slammer. Jeremy ended up with a stiletto up his exit pipe. If there was really poetry in justice, that was it.

The son-of-a-bitch deserved it. Goddamned stupid glasses. And there he goes again, peeking inside his half-eaten bun. What in the hell is he looking at in there? You'd think

it was a friggin' furburger.

Polo turned his attention back to his chef salad, where he found a tasty-looking slice of swiss that had tried to hid itself down between a wedge of tomato and half a hard-boiled egg. "That's right," he said to himself. "I know you're there. Come on out to play-cops, game's over," he mumbed as he shoved it into his mouth. He quickly glanced around to see if anyone was looking at him. They weren't. They were too busy snarfing down their own midday slop.

The woman in the corner, near the doors to the kitchen, was having what looked like a spinach quiche with a small

amount of salad garnish on the side. She was drinking water; to purge her evil soul. Her name was Emily Timmerman. She had a pinched little mouth and ratlike eyes. And was that the faint shad owing of a moustache, left undipilitated, on her upper lip? Her hands, like her fineers, were long

and thin. This morning she had risen early and used those hands to make Marco, her husband of twenty-two years, a breakfast of eggs, bacon and toast-with marmalade, no less-a cholesterol hit to beat the band; the perfect meal for a fifty five-year old man with clogged arteries. But Emily couldn't wait a year or two for the fatty buildup to give him the big one. Sick bitch. Stop editorializing. Polo interrupted himself. He concentrated more strongly on the case. Emily had added a special arsenic and paprika spice to Marco's eggs. When she left for the day, Marco's face was in the middle of an unfinished slice of toast, marmalade squishing around the sides of his face. As if that wasn't enough, she'd kicked a stray cat on the way out to her car. She was in a hurry to get to the mall to buy a black mourning outfit. Don't get carried away, Polo, he admonished himself.

Oyez, oyez, oyez...

Guilty, guilty, guilty....

Fry her, gas her, hang her, drug her.... Naaah. As Jack Ketchum once pointed out, let the punishment suit the crime. Polo decided to bring this one into real time.

She's bound into a big heavy oak chair. In front of her, on a large video screen, is a blowup of the front page of Marco's million dollar insurance policy, showing Emily as the

sole beneficiary.

She's force-fed eggs with arsenic--a little paprika garnish for show. Not a killer dose, though. She's fed the same thing every two hours until eventually she dies. It's a long, drawn out affair with much suffering.

Polo spared himself the details, as he had more cases to consider.

The woman finished her quiche and was daintily wiping her mouth with her napkin. Funny. He hadn't really noticed her hair color and style before. It was almost like his mother's, before she died. They said his mother had died of cancer. He wondered...

The lunch hour seemed to be seeping away. Two convictions wasn't satisfactory. Polo looked down at his chef salad and went straight for one of the hard-boiled egg halves and shoved it unceremoniously into his mouth, following it up with a wedge of tomato, a slice of chedata and a droopy leaf lettuce. Only then did he realize that he'd failed to coat it all with a gob of bleu cheese. To remedy that he dipped his fork into the cup of chunky white, moldy-looking dressing and stirred it around. The whole business reminded him of the stuff Jeremy had left on the hooker's busn. Maybe that's

what the Peeker was looking for in his burger. Polo chuckled at the thought. Finally, Polo found a small chunk of the stuff buried in the cup of dressing and brought the trimming to his mouth. He failed to notice that a drip of it fell onto the front of his pin-striped white birt next to his plain brown

tie. Lisa, his wife, would scold him for that, and he would probably pout in front of the nightly TV fare until dropping off to sleep in his rocker before LA Law came on.

Polo decided it was best to continue eating while his eyes roamed. Ah...the old man in the Swiss alpine hat and big gray overcoat, both of which remained on his person as he drank his tea. Only tea. He'd either ordered no food or it hadn't come vet. Polo suspected the former.

The man's name was Alex Pederson. His face was turned away from Polo, toward the window. However, the wrinkles on the side of the forehead and around the corner of his mouth, combined with the crows feet crawling out from the eye indicted him as an octogenerian: eighty-two, Polo decided, for no reason other than that as the age of his father when he'd died.

Alex sipped his tea without much enthusiasm. His weary face told of a man who, although had in general lived an exemplary life, nonetheless was hiding a past secret so dark that it had long ago turned the corners of his mouth down in a perpetual clown's face.

Polo looked into the man's soul and discovered his secret. When the man was only twenty-two--sixty years ago, thought Polo (he liked nice even numbers)--Alex had done

something terrible. So terrible that it had haunted him all his awakened days and nightmare-ridden nights,

At twenty-two, Ålex Pederson found himself homeless, down-and-out on the streets of the city. Roaming the streets and on the verge of hunger, Alex happened upon Joe, the blind man. When Alex was employed, he'd always given his loose change to Joe. During the better times, Alex had always seen Joe during the hustle-bustle of the day. But this time it was night, it was cold, Alex was on the verge of starvation, and the only one with change in his pocket was Joe, the blind

Although he didn't know Alex by name, Joe recognized his deep, gravely voice, so felt nothing but trust when Alex asked him to come back into the alley, where no one would see that he was giving Joe a substantial amount of money—a Christmas present, as it was Christmas Eve. Polo thought that was a nice touch.

In the alley, Alex robbed Joe the blind man of his money. And when Joe protested, Alex punched him in the face, breaking the blind man's traditional dark glasses and leaving him lying in a heap behind a collection of garbage cans. Polo decided that Alex didn't step on the glasses, orushing them beneath his shoes. Alex may have been desperate, but he wasn't cruel. It snowed that night, the snow turning to sleet and frozen rain. The blind man was found the next day, dead. Hardened like a fish packed in ice.

Alex used the money to give him a few more days of life. Enough time to secure himself a job and, shortly thereafter, a place to live. Alex became wealthy, married, had a family, grandchildren...

The lunch hour was running short.

Oyez, oyez, oyez....

Guilty, guilty, guilty....

Alex Pederson was tied to a pole, much like the one they used for firing squad victims. Polo decided to use the Ketchum principle again; it seemed so appropriate. A blind man, selected at random from the street, was told of the story, given a knife, and set free to gouge out Alex's eyes. It was a sloppy job. The officials didn't let Alex die, however. He was treated at the emergency medical center and released back into society, his debt paid.

"I'll take this whenever you're ready." The voice was

high-pitched, squeaky almost.

Unconsciously, Polo had finished his meal during the last episode and was now being presented with the check. Six dollars and fifty-five cents. He glanced around the room. The whore-killer/bun pecker was gone. So was the poisoner. Polo quickly swilled down his coffee, left a five and two ones on the table and hustled his butt out the door. Didn't want to be late back to work. Needed that raise so next summer he could take Lisa and kids to Disneyland.

Outside, on the way by the restaurant window, his eyes met those of the old man's-rather, the sockets where the old man's eyes should have been.

Polo hurried on his way, shuddering, wondering what that had meant, even if it had been real, or if his mind was just playing tricks on him, trying to remember at what point in his life that reality had wandered off and fantasy had crept

Or was it the other way around?

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Ells

By Jeffrey Thomas

R. LUX, YOUR wife has been calling for you."

"I know, Mrs. LeBlanc. I can hear her from here." Noticing how the private nurse was trying to peer curiously past him into his workshop, Lux closed the door so that only his face was wedged in the crack.

Mrs. LeBlanc softened slightly. His face was not the face of an apathetic, unconcerned man. Rather, he looked so drained of color and energy she might have believed that his wife 's cancer was contagious. He seemed to be dying with her. It was no wonder he was apparently avoiding seeing her, now that the end was drawing close, now that Violet Lux was delirious with the cancer in her brain and morphine was being administered to alleviate the agony.

"It's difficult for you, I realize, but "

"So many divorces, Mrs. LeBlanc. So many unhappy couples even when they do stay together. But my wife and L. we truly love each other. We've been married seventeen years, and we're still in love. She's my best friend, Mrs. LeBlanc. I've never been embarrassed to say that, even to my male friends. They've teased me. Laughed at me. But I think they're jealous, because they don't have that. Such a simple thing, to let someone close to you like that. But so few people will do it, for all our love songs and romance novels. And even when they do open themselves they sabotage it in so many ways. But we were happy. So happy. And we could have had so many more years. We're only in our forties. We could have had decades. Why does this have to happen to us, when we had what was so rare? Does that seem fair to vou?"

"No sir...it doesn't. I guess you can call it irony."

"I call it evil, And I won't accept it."

The face wedged in the door looked odd-maybe frightening. Mrs. LeBlanc hesitated She saw a computer monitor's glow behind Dr. Lux, heard a steady liquid burbling, "I know it's hard to accept these things, Dr. Lux, and it really isn't any of my business, but I think she needs you right now...."

"That's the drugs talking. And the pain. It isn't her. She knows I have work to do in here. We discussed all this."

"It could be any time now." She was getting a bit irritated again. Work? What kind of work? He needed to wake up and go hold his wife's hand right now, help her on her way. If he didn't, he'd never fergive himself when he realized what he 'd done. "Denial is normal, I know, but...."

"I don't deny that my wife is dying. I just deny that

Death has a right to take her."

Mrs. LeBlanc thought it odd that a Beckham University biology professor should make death sound like an entity. "Look," she sighed, "I'd better get back to her." "Please do, Mrs. LeBlanc. Please stay with her." The anger that had made Lux's face increasingly unsettling dispersed, and once more he simply looked exhausted by his tragedy. "Mrs. LeBlanc..do you believe in the afterlife?"

"Yes, sir. L., just don't know what it must be like."
Lux knew better than to believe her. She had no faith.
Still, he told her, "My wife believes. She believes very
strongly. And so do I. She got me to believing, despite the
stance of those who de what I do. My wife is very widely
read...and she introduced me to concepts of metaphysics my
colleagues haven't even heard of, let alone subscribe to." Lux
thought better of what he was revealing, and got to his point.
"I believe there is a spirit, but that it's simply a scientific
reality beyond the scope of contemporary science."

"I sure hope so, Dr. Lux. It sure would be nice."

He would tell her no more. "Thank you, Mrs. LeBlanc. Now, please go to her."

Nodding, the nurse turned back toward the house. Lux's workshop was contained within a converted stable adjacent to a vast barn she thought would make somebody a nice apartment, though she had never seen inside. On her way back across the cool night grass, she thought about what Lux had said. He was right; what he had with his wife was rare. She and her husband had just filed for divorce themselves.

HE COULDN'T GO up there. Couldn't see what she had become at the last. And he couldn't place the tank in the room with her, not with the nurse keeping constant vigil. He had explained this to Violet before--before she lost coherence -- and she had understood. She had smiled to reassure him. I'll come find the tank. I'll know where to look. And you don't have to be with me when I go, Carl, because I won't be gone long." She had even more faith than he in this all along. Now she was erying out, but it was lisk Christ crucified and feeling forsaken. The suffering getting in the way. He only hoped that through the suffering, through the drugs, her subconscious, her will, her spirit held on to her conviction.

Christ had cried out. But Christ had come back.

"I don't want you to see me like that anyway," she had reassured him, then.

She was down to ninety-six pounds, but the mass in the tank weighed one hundred and forty--the weight she had carried before. Well, minus twenty pounds.

It would seem a huge mass of protoplasm to anyone not familiar with the experiment. (He tried not to think of it as an experiment. This implied possible failure. This must not fail. It was, quite literally, a matter of life and death.) But Lux thought of the mass as tiny, compared with what he had grown and could have grown.

He had been inspired by a series of experiments by Dr. Phillip White of the Rockefeller Institute, had duplicated much of them in his workshop and later in the barn.

Like White, he had begun with a tiny wart of a growth taken from a tobacco plant. This, rather than the specialized cells.of, say, a stem or a leaf. In a special solution of nutrients, he had allowed the cells to multiply, unhindered, unchecked. He dubbed the growth a "couch potato," since it only had to sit and grow obese, without work, with no specialized identity. Undifferentiated cells with no purpose or responsibility other than to eat, to grow...

The theoretical rate of multiplication for White's cellsand Lux's-was 10,000,000,000,000,000-fold over a fortyweek period. At this rate of growth, had White not cut away and disposed of the culture of cells, at the end of that forty weeks he would have ended up with a solid mass which would fill the solar system to its very rim.

Theoretically speaking, of course. And given the vast nourishment necessary.

But White had continued to dispose of most of the growth throughout the course of his experiments. Lux had followed suit; he was constantly pruning, skining away, like a surgeon. Sometimes he imagined that he was cutting out Violet's cancer, and burning it. But every day it grew back, and he had to do it again.

Carl Lux had disposed of much of his growth.

Though not as much as Dr. White had disposed of.

LUX LIFTED HIS head with a small gasp.

After one vertiginous moment he remembered where he was. The workshop. Shortly after the nurse had left him he had put his head down on his arms at his desk, fatigued.

'He was badly shaken from his dream. It had been awful. In it, it wasn't Violet's spirit which found a new home in the blank mass of cells, in its tank of nourishment awaiting some purpose as a canvas awaits paint. It was the cancer which took over the mass..becoming a 140-pound tumor. After all, wasn't that what the cancer wanted to do? Engulf and obliterate Violet entirely' And didn't its mindless will now seem to be stronger than her own?

He smoothed back his hair with his hands, his eves falling on the spines of the books on their shelves above his desk. Some Violet had owned when he met her. Others they had sought out together, in preparation, Modern works by Colin Wilson, rare moldering texts by all but forgotten hands. Violet might once have been burned as a witch for possessing any one of these older tomes. What would Lux's fellow professors think if they knew he had spent as much money acquiring two volumes of the eleven-volume Revelations of Glaaki as they would spend on a vacation to Bermuda with their healthy wives? And what would they think if they saw what those pages contained, the madness purported to be history and science? Why, they might well wonder, was there a bookmark in the pages which told of the origins and conjuring--the growing--of something called a shoggoth...an amorphous aggregation of cells that could be telepathically molded by those who dared to use these creatures as slaves?

What would they think of the odd, Mayan-like tattoo Violet had copied from one of her books onto her belly, only last month? Yaguedy Lux wondered what Mrs. LeBlane must think of that 'strange spiraling design. Would she believe them both insane if he told her it was a doorway from which his wife would escape her poisoned flesh? He rose from the desk. His dream had so unsettled him that he felt compelled to go look in on the tank....

The fluorescent lights of the barn came on with a hesitant flicker.

Lux was reassured to see things in order. He checked the tank for the tenth time that day. Inside its glass coffin, the culture was an oblong blob of pale dough. It didn't breathe. It didn't pulsate. But it was life, in its most primitive state. It awaited specialization. Transformation. It awaited the strong vision of the artist and her paints. If only there would be enough of Violet left to be that artist...

At least the mass wouldn't fight her for dominion of its body. It had no consciousness, no sense of self; indeed, no self. It awaited self.

Lux wandered the barn, smoking a cigarette. He peered into the other tanks and containers.

There were other masses. Some tiny. A few in tanks as large as the one containing Violet's clay. Some masses were larger. One of these was a huge mound, a white mountain of protoplasm, sitting in a puddle of solution in a child's plastic swimming pool. As he passed, he stroked its slick, smooth flesh. In a few other pools were somewhat smaller masses. Other experiments. But these were also spare parts. If Violet couldn't shape, sculpt,

He hoped his wife would not have to live in one of these

The spirit existed. Persisted. So many already believed

tanks, sit forever in one of these pools. No...she wouldn't

that when the body died, the spirit went on its on. But why

shouldn't it have a new body to possess? One with no real

life of its own to oust? A sort of reincarnation. Tibetan monks

conjured up thought forms called tulpas, gave them life of

their own. Why shouldn't Violet conjure herself in this pliable

stuff of life from which all life had originated in the first

stood smoking his cigarette amongst his hulking, idiot crop.

Lux heard her calling for him in the house, sobbed as he

transform the designated lump of cells, maybe she could switch to another and try again. Or what if she did transform the mass, but it couldn't sustain its integrity? She might need to constantly switch to a fresh vehicle.

have to. He mustn't let his faith falter.

Dark blobs glowed so very dimly in the blue light from outside. And even as Lux's fingertips found the switch, he saw several of the hulking mounds move....

chair. She's very cold; it must have been a few hours ago, at least. I'm sorry, Dr. Lux, I'm so sorry. But it must have been peaceful, for me not to have heard anything..."

"Yes," Lux said, snapping his head to look at his wall, racks and shelves cluttered with the paraphernalia of science and his books on the occult and mystics. Beyond that wall was the barn interior. "Thank you, Mrs. LeBlanc. Please make the appropriate calls now, will you?

"Yes, sir, um...I will. But...don't you want to see her?"
"Not yet. Maybe later."

The nurse's eyes dropped to his fingers, gripping the door edge as if to burrow into the wood. In addition, the claw hand was humming with vibration. She said, "Yes, sir," and walked back across the sparkling morning dew, crushing and killing countless minute and primitive organisms whose passing went unnoticed and unmourneé.

HE BURST INTO the barn. Slants of pink-gold light were beaming through a few gaps in the high wood walls. A bar of this light lay across the giant mound of cells in its child's pool, the rest of its flesh a cool shadowy blue. The tank was out of reach of the light, dark and obscure. Before going to it, Lux hit the lights...as if for the first time, the thought of seeing

Violet lying in there naked, eyes open and waiting for him, terrified him. But even as he did so, he knew what he would see.

The dough was not bread. The stone unchiseled. The

canvas blank.
In its tank, the 140 pounds of tobacco plant wart slept screnely, dreamless.

How could be have ever believed? How had he ever deluded himself, found faith in his delusions?

The same way all those who dreamed of the spirit persisting, of heavens, deluded themselves. Out of denial, as Mrs. LeBlanc had said. Out of fear....

It all ended in the flesh. In the jail of the cells, without escape or chance of parole.

With a liberation of his full fury, with a long suppressed wail of loss and frustration, Carl Lux swept up a heavy spade from its nail in the barn wall and ran at the obese bathing mound first. The Lord of the Idiots. The Emperor of the Unknowing. Its flesh was slashed without bleeding under the thumping and whacking blows of the shovel. It didn't seem to mind dying.

Lux was soaked in sweat and hoarse by the time he turned on the tank. It was the last targe: he'd saved, and he hesitated. He hesitated. But then he struck. The glass shattered, the nutrient solution gushed free like liquor annii...but this fetus had never formed.

Mrs. LeBlanc heard his cries, and the smashing, but was too afraid to go see what he was doing. She'd rather remain with the corpse.

THE POUNDING AT the workshop door was, in Lux's

place?

dream interpretation, the beat of a heart lurching violently to life. His ear was to his work bench as if to a cold chest listening for that throb. In his jolting awake he leapt to his feet, almost knocking back his chair. He rushed to the door, opened it to see the orange-pink of dawn glowing dimly around the head of Mrs. LeBlanc.

She was breathless. "Dr. Lux...I'm sorry. She's gone...."
"Gone?" He gawked at her, disoriented.

"I'm not sure when it happened. I fell asleep in my

HER COLD FLESH had been taken away.

Lux laughed at himself, wagging his head. He nearly tipped the glass of vodka reaching for it. Finally, with Violet gone, he sat in the house. Finally he had held her hand, just as they were ready to take her. Once again Mrs. LeBlanc had been right, he should have come to her while she was calling for him. Now it was too late. She was gone forever. Even Mrs. LeBlanc was gone. Night was a mantle on his house and on what he once would have called his soul.

She must have been calling out for him to tell him the truth she had realized toward the end. That there were not going to be any miracles. Only the mindless mind of Nature could shape primal matter—not the ingenuity or will of humans. Nature was pragmatic, maybe that was the key. With humans, passion hindered everything.

There was a loud crash from outside the house.

From the barn.

Lux stiffened. It was surely something he had attacked with the shovel, toppling further. Or maybe raccoons or skunks had gotten in there, now that it was night; he remembered having left the barn doors wide, no longer concerned with secreev.

But another sound came, and Lux knew that no raccoon or skunk would be smashing things so loudly....

He rose from the sofa. Vandals, maybe? Kids, having seen the barn open? He moved into the kitchen, shut off the lights and pecked around the lace in the back door window. The barn door gaped darkly. No ghostly flashlights in that cavern. He took up his own flashlight-and a short sword of a bread knife. Violet's knife. She had been a wonderful cook. A gourmet. The foolish attention humans paid to such primitive functions as eating...and for what, in the end, all that fore? Only to lose it, only to die, only...

Lux hushed his babbling mind as he eased the back door open. The night was cool and still-poised. He stalked away from the house, feeling vulnerable away from it, under the yawning black sky. His cars strained ahead of him like dogs on leash, but he heard no further sounds coming from the...

"Carl...."

Oh. God

Lux was spiked to his spot, transfixed from head to soles. It was Violet's voice. The same mournful sob of a cry he had heard last night. But now it came from the barn.

Part of him leaped up inside, elated. Part of him wanted to spin and bolt for the house. Caught between these extremes, he swayed, a sob of fear or hope or confusion snagged in his throat.

"Caart," the voice moaned. The voice was louder than it had been last night, and deeper. Oddly strong and resonant. Almost a rumble across the damp grass to him. But it was Violet, without question. Violet.

Lux staggered forward, a smile flickering on the electrified muscles of his face...and yet he still gripped the bread knife and held it before him as he went.

"Violet," he said. "Violet," as he reached the dark mouth of the barn. He reached only his arm inside to paw for the lights. "Violet "

For a moment before he hit the switch, his eyes made out shapes across the barn floor. The carnage of his fury; the shattered tanks, splintered shelves, the slaughtered giants too primitive to be either plant or amoeba but so large that he had barely chiseled them down. Dark blobs glowing so very dimly in the blue light from outside. And even as his finger tips found the switch, Lux saw several of the hulking mounds

At the revelation in the full light from overhead, Lux screamed. Not a cry. Not a shout. A scream....

The pale masses of primal flesh lay where he had left them, for the most part. They rested in the splinters of glass and wood on the floor. But the floor as he had left it had been awash in nutrient solution from the shattered tanks and overturned pools. Now it was dry, the spilled nourishment greedily absorbed.

small mass twitched by his foot, but his eyes flicked horrified between several of the larger pallid blobs. From onerwisted in anguished knots-there protruded a slim, nearly skeletal arm which clawed at the floorboards in an attempt to pull itself along. An almost spherical mass nearer to him was smooth except for the outlines of bones pressing at its skin; humped vertebrae like the horny spine of a dinosaur, ribs like prison bars picked out in vivid relief.

The once inviting cradle of her pelvis was now some sharp and hateful animal skull yawning to tear through the flesh of another blob, this one with glass shards stuck in it. Somehow, several pseudopods like grotesque flippers slapped at the floor to draw this horror alone.

A thumping drew Lux's streaming eyes to the greatest of his crop, still hulking despite his attack. Though rent and cleft by his blows, it loomed, and a rudimentary, human leg hung from its side, stamping at the ground in an obscene convolvion

"Ohh, God...oh, Violet...oh God!" Lux sobbed. It was the vodka, the vodka and insanity....

"Carl." Violet's voice rattled, to his side,

He dare not look dare not look....

He looked.

The 140-pound vessel he had set out to catch her soul. The clay for her to mold. The voice, of course, came from that. From the mockery of vocal cords shaped from that primordial matter.

He met Violet's eyes there. Not much else of her showed in that too white rubbery flesh. The light from above made her eyes dark skull socket pools, made pools under the jutting of her bony checks. Her mouth was a wide, gnashing orifice. It was a face wasted by cancer, this now her subconscious conception of herself. It was a face of suffering. The mouth worked, the eyes blinked. They were white like the flesh, no color left in them.

"Carl ... " the deep, sepulchral voice groaned.

Had she started with the destination mass he had cultivated as her spirit's receptacle? Found it lying on the boards and taken it anyway...but then needed more cells to take full form, to duplicate the great complexity of her former body? Or had her spirit become confused in transit, sent forth as it was in the delirium of her pain? Had he acted prematurely, and in smashing his experiment, shattered her focus? Had he done this to her?

Or had the cancer in her brain had its own tenacity for life...also imposed its will in the making of this tormented sculpture? And might it continue to make its will known; its hunger?

"Caaarrl."

A number of the blobs had variations on those crude flippers, used them or a single distorted limb to drag themselves along, and Lux realized their intention. They were hopelessly attempting to converge, to meet. To unite. It was futile. Several blobs were already floundering against each other helplessly. It was good that they couldn't limk. Their mass, united, would only result in one great monster in the place of these many.

Lux thought of the hypothetical monster of Dr. White. Growing to the orbit of Pluto, and beyond. In his mind, he saw these creatures drawing on more nutrients, growing without his diligent pruning and burning, dragging their bulks out into the world, a herd of cancerous titans, hungry...so hungry to live. A herd of Gods. Idiot Gods. He began to laugh ...laugh and wag his head. Laugh and wag his head and shake with wrenching sobs that pummeled him inside.

"Carl," Violet moaned. Her face implored him from one blob, a beseeching arm reached for him from another. He stumbled back into the threshold, thinking that the creatures meant to seize him, engulf him, absorb him, grow larger and hungrier yet.

"Carl...kill me...."

"Yes," he sobbed.
"Kill me."

"I will. I will, darling."

The fear went out of him at those words, washed out of him in his tears, and with a purity of purposes, Lux went to the reaching hand and took hold of it. The fingers were cold but strong as they clasped his. He pulled the blob into the center of the floor...hehn went to push another of them closer. Another. The leg of the great hulk did its best to assist him in sliding itself along.

Last, the mass with her face. Lux avoided looking at it as he lifted the thing in his arms. Ignored her mouth as it worked in dry sobs against his chest. Gently, reverently, he set this creature down with the others.

He walked across the floor boards to where several cans of gasoline were lined up along the inner wall by the lawmmower. "I love you, darling," he choked, returning to splash the fluid across the hideous congregation. "Oh, God...I love you..."

She shook now with sobs herself, painful retches that made most of the fragments of her quiver and spasm, and for their combined bulk made the floor tremble. Lux could only bear it long enough to complete his task.

He poured the last of the second gasoline can over his

own head and shoulders.

Then he went to her, unafraid, and knelt down for her to gently enfold him. An arm from this mass wrapped around his back, most of a hand from that mass clutched at his sleeve. He met her eyes again, and though they appeared blind he felt their contact. He clasped himself against her for a few moments, both of them now hushed, strangely calmed, before he dug the lighter from his pocket.

He smiled against her white flesh, pressed his lips into it. This was not a tragedy, he realized. It was a revelation.

The spirit lived on. It could escape its cells, live free of them. But he had been wrong in trying to ground it in matter once more.

Now, they would escape those bonds together.



NEXT ISSUE:

Fiction by J.N. Williamson, Nancy Kilpatrick, Deidre Cox, William Bowers, William R. Trotter, Jim Austin, Wayne Allen Sallee, Mark Rich, mcre. Profiles of British author D. F. Lewis and Kentucky author Deidre Cox. Cover art by Harry Fassl. Watch for it....



Jack Ketchum, Jasmine Sailing & Wayne Allen Sallee on the NYC Subway, looking dangerous.

Horror! The 1993 HWA Business Meeting

By Edward Lee

SHORT AND SWEET report, here, of this year's Annual Meeting of the Horror Writers of America-now known as the Horror Writers Association, to encompass its broadening international scope. This time, the festivities were held at NYC's Warwick Hotel, which, though lacking the brass and glass of the Parker-Meridian, provided a wonderful--and atmospheric--convention facility. It must be said, too, that the Warwick's staff, from bellhop to general manager. bent over backwards to accommodate the present legion of horror. (It must also be mentioned that a great Irish pub, Connally's, was just across the street to provide a very necessary overflow when the Warwick's own tayern filled up. I shudder to think how much beer passed their taps that weekend!) On Friday, shifts of writers amassed at the Forbidden Planet bookstore to sign their latest releases, among them Phil Nutman with his frenetic WETWORK and Graham Watkins and his first hardcover, KALEIDOSCOPE EYES. The usual events ensued over the weekend: generous publisher-sponsored parties, a rather catty business meeting, and a salvo of very interesting panels which included such topics as young adult horror, multimedia, comics, and agents. The small press seemed better-

represented this year than in the past,

with such attendees as Stan Tal, George Hatch, Jasmine Sailing and John Maclay, to name a few; and the usual cool editors from the big press, such as Jean Cavelos, Ginjer Buchanan, and Amy Stout. On Saturday evening, the Awards banquet unfolded, kicked off by great speeches from Whitley Streiber, Chris Golden, and the Guest of Honor, the legendary John Carpenter. This year's Stoker winners were Thomas Monteleone for Best Novel (BLOOD OF THE LAMB); Elizabeth Massie for Best First Novel (SINEATER); a tie for Best Novelette between Stephen Bissette (ALIENS: TRIBES) and

Joe R. Lansdale (THE EVENTS CONCERNING A NUDE FOLD-OUT FOUND IN A HARLE-QUIN RO-MANCE); Dan Simmons for Best Short Story (THIS YEAR'S CLASS PIC-TURE); Norman Partridge for Best Collection (MR FOX & OTHER FERAL TALES): and

Christopher Golden for Best Non-Fiction (CUT! HORROR WRITERS ON HORROR FILM). Congratulations to all the winners!

Edward Lee's Best Line of the Con Award, however, goes to an unnamed panhandler who approached John Maclay and I, proffered his stereotypical cup, and said, "Can you guys spare some change? My Bentley payments are killers,"

Naturally, we gave him money. See you all next year!



Stanley Wiater, pointing to a horse.

OUT FROM THE SHADOWS

(Continued from page 5)

Michael Thomas Dillon's On the Edge of the Pit was possibly inspired by horror icon Robert Bloch's classic Beelzebub. Perhaps both tales will one day appear as companion pieces between the covers of a theme anthology.

Passing Death by Don D'Ammassa was an intriguing supernatural mystery.

Nancy Ellis Taylor's visceral poem Down the Wall was a powerful piece of verse. I found this poem to be a most disquieting and disturbing work.

Welcome back, DEATHREALM,

Jeffrey Goddin Bloomington, IN

I loved View from Carcosa. The tale of Wagner's shy and unobtrusive visit to another culture is a model of decorum for us all.

In DEATHREALM #18, I particularly liked Don D'Ammassa's Passing Death. Seems that it, with a little expansion, would make one hell of a screenplay. It's a story that implies a lot more than it states and does so in an original manner.

Glad to see that DEATHREALM's under full sail "the way it's 'sposed to be."

> Cathy Buburuz Regina, Saskatchewan Canada

About DEATHREALM #18...squirmy yet fascinating cover by Augie Wiedemann. You always have a fine line-up of writers in every issue, but I truly missed Osier and Massie in #18 (in my opinion these two are the best in the business). And I'd be remiss if I did not mention that I quite liked your rendition of a housefly on page 44. Tell Andrea Locke that I always enjoy her no-nonsense approach to reviews.

> Deirdre Cox Garrett, KY

DEATHREALM #18 was great! The cover, the artwork and ves, the fiction were just wonderful. You and Tal deserve a tremendous pat on the back. Can't wait to see the next one. And the World Horror Con article by Edward Lee was a real trip! Take care and stay cool.

FORBIDDEN TEXTS

(Continued from page 41)

he helps his relatives, and drinks martinis with green olives, Wisman has left this troubleshooter with almost no character. Instead, the author has concentrated his efforts on embellishing the other relatives. We don't learn much about the principal protagonist in these yarns, and that bothered me, and kept me from becoming terribly interested in reading any further volumes of his adventures.

If I seem to be damning this work with faint praise, it is only because Wisman seems to be close to something more with this volume. I have to recommend WEIRD FAMILY TALES because it is highly enjoyable; but I hope that his next collection of short stories features original tales of the supernatural, and that he leaves his "family" behind.

--Andrea Locke

BOOKS TO KEEP an eve open for:

DEATHREALM readers might want to be aware of a number of new releases in the horror genre from major publishing houses.

AFTER AGE (Bantam) by Yvonne Navarro. A novel "in the tradition of THE STAND," about post-apocalyptic Chicago, said apocalypse being a vanspiric plague that has swept across the earth. This is DEATHREALM alumnus Navarro's first novel. Having been offered a 3-book contract, Ms. Navarro will be a name to watch out for in upcoming months. Her second novel has already been submitted and accepted.

DARKER SAINTS (Dell/Abyss) by Brian Hodge. This is a new novel that features the main characters from his third outing, NIGHT LIFE. A tale of clark suspense, mystery and voodoo set in New Orleans. Brian was nominated for HWA's Stoker Award for Best Novel last year for his fourth book, DEATHGRIP.

DEATHPORT (Pocket), the new anthology sponsored by The Horror Writers Association, edited by Ramsey Campbell, Features 28 stories by HWA's members, revolving around a southwestern airport "haunted" by the spirits of a massacred Indian tribe. The stories as a whole rise above the somewhat limiting theme. Authors include Charles Grant, Matthew Costello, Dan Perez, Adam-Troy Castro, Nancy Kilpatrick, Nancy Holder, Stephen Mark Rainey, David Niall Wilson, Steve Rasnic Tem, more.

MISTS OUT OF TIME (Roc), edited by Robert Weinberg, Stefan Dziemianowicz and Martin Greenberg. An anthology of ghost stories ranging from early 20th century traditional to contemporary. Authors include Ray Bradbury, Fritz Leiber, Edith Wharton, Bram Stoker, Clive Barker, Joyce Carol Oates, Robert Bloch, Shirley Jackson, many more. An excellent collection coming out just in time for Halloween.

--Andrea Locke

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You won't be sorry! Unless, of course, you fail

DEATH'S DOOR

(Continued from page 31)

of each line in one poem spells out an invocation for the return of the dead. What ensues is an often greating struggle for sanity as the Lodger attempts to possess the young man's body in hopes of being resurrected. A classic horror theme, told with a refreshing, wit-imbibed voice that DEATHREALM readers may recall from Chappell's relate The Adder from issue #9 (which subsequently reappeared in St Martins Press' YEAR'S BEST FANTASY & HORROR and Chappell's collection MORE SHAPES THAN ONE, also from St. Martins).

The Lodger represents Fred Chappell at his best, and should not be missed. See it first from Necronomicon Press; I wouldn't be surprised if this novelette makes yet another YEAR'S BEST appearance.

SINISTRE (NOCTULPA #7) c/o Horror's Head Press, 140 Dickie Ave, Staten Island, NY 10314. Editor: George Hatch. 5.5" x 8.5" perfect bound. 158 pages. \$8.95.

SINISTRE IS A perfect bound, slick treasure. It contains sixteen stories of such generally high quality that I was left looking forward to Hatch's next editorial effort. The only real problem I had with the anthology is that I was not very happy with the illustrations by t. Winter-Damon; his "psychocollages" were but pale and poor imitations of the work of artists such as Harry Fassl and J. K. Potter. Perhaps he will grow more skilled as he practices the form.

Hatch has assembled an able bunch of writers here, and, as usual, he introduces us to some young talent. Yes, the anthology has a few clunkers, but these are far outweighed by the level of writing present in the better tales.

The book opens with A. R. Morlan's Tattoo, a story which sets the tone for the remainder of the book. Hers is a short one, five quick pages, but very powerful and quite clewer. Morlan's imagery and talent at characterization with quick, considered

strokes is in itself a lesson in writing for those willing to learn.

Don Webb follows with The Idiot God, easily the best story in the anthology. This short concerns the life-long connection, and obsession, between two seemingly unconnected men from childhood into later life. Webb impressed the heck out of me with his skill and imagination, and combined with the effort from his story in the last issue of DEATHREALM, I would say we have a major new talent on hand. This gut is good.

The third yarn is The Power of One by Nancy Kilpatrick. Again, I was impressed. It concerns one woman's obsession with her own, twisted form of numerology, a story of deep, believable mental illness. I was a bit disappointed in its ending, a turn for the worse from a convincing line into a bit of melodramatic soap opera. Still, it has made Wagner's YEAR'S BEST HORROR, and it is indeed a very good piece.

Of the thirteen remaining stories in SINISTRE, virtually all of them were excellent. Robert Frazier graces us with a flawed gem of a story entitled Too Long in the Wasteland. It's very predictable, but his world is so weird that the situation seems very natural, and the ending comes off as logical rather than disappointing. Anke Kriske's Make Up was quite chilling, and would have been good in almost any, non-themed anthology; it's a frightening read. One other story of note here is Commuter by William Laughlin. It's a scary one, dealing with an examination of obsession and compulsion at an uncomfortably close proximity.

One of the last stories is That is What I Think by James D. Reynolds III. It's a disgusting bit of sado-nihisim, but is so well executed that I felt compelled to finish it despite the grand-guignol excesses presented. While I have no desire to read this kind of splatter as a rule, I would certainly like to see more stories from Mr. Revnolds.

There were a few disappointments here, a couple by authors whose work I had quite admired in the past. The only flaw worth mentioning,

though, is Plastic Bobby, by the editor himself, George Hatch. I admire the editor who refrains from publishing his own work, and would advise Hatch to do likewise in future editions of NOC-TULPA. This short story was put together competently enough, but was just plain dumb. This is the kind of adolescent drivel one hopes not to encounter in an anthology as well-executed as this one.

Oh, yes--there's also a story by DEATHREALM's editor Rainey in here, but asked me not to mention it unless I really hated it.

All in all SINISTRE is a superlative package, and worth the price of admission.

HORROR--THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF THE HORROR & DARK FANTA-SY FIELD c/o Wildside Press, 37 Fillmore St, Newark, NJ 017105. Editor: John Gregory Betancourt. 6 issues/518.00, 12 issue/548.00.

THIS SPOT IS not a review but more of an advance notice of the upcoming news magazine, entitled simply HOR-ROR from Wildside Press. This publication plans to adopt a format similar to LOCUS, serving the horror/dark fantasy community with news, market reports, reviews, opinion columns, etc. and so forth. The first issue, scheduled for release at the World Fantasy Convention in November, will feature an interview with Peter Straub, conversation with Dell/Abyss editor Jeanne Cavelos and new horror writer Poppy Z. Brite. You may look forward to future interviews with Dean R. Koontz. George Romero, editor Ginjer Buchanan (Ace Books), and many

Reviews of major new releases in books, comics, and film are covered by writers like Craig Shaw Garnder, Lawrence Watt-Evans, Nina Kiriki Hoffman, David Niall Wilson, Mark Rainey, and many more.

Former WEIRD TALES editor John Betancourt has engineered this package, in hopes of putting out a much-needed, fact-filled magazine geared toward the horror professional. That is not to say it provides a textbook course on how to flambe your mother. Down, people...

WHO'S WHO IN DEATHREALM

Lee Atkinson of Martinsville, Virginia, has been an artist for many years, with a predilection for the bizarre. His work in this issue represents his first published appearance.

Robert Baldwin & Cathy Buburuz have collaborated on numerous pieces of art, including one from the last issue of DEATHREALM. They hail from La Canada, California and Regina, Saskatechewan, respectively.

Lida Broadhurst of Oakland, has been writing poetry and short stories all her life, but only in the last few years since her husband retired and her children left home has she had time to send her thoughts off to find a wider readership. Hopefully, her exposure in these pages will lead to bigger and better opportunities.

Tom Brown, of Houston, Texas, has only just recently joined the ranks of paid and published authors—with our publication of Moonlight Sonata, After 34 years of practicing law, Mr. Brown now considers himself a writer; in fact, he may even adopt a pen name.

Douglas Clegg is the author of several novels, including GOAT DANCE, BREEDER and NEVERLAND. The Hurting Season is his first DEATHREALM appearance. See the interview in this issue for more credits.

S. Dambrook Colson, dubbed by Tal as "The Bad Boy of Horror," has been published in numerous fiction and non-fiction markets, such as BZJARRE BAZAAR, HELIOCENTRIC NET, NIGHTSIDE, THE BARRELHOUSE, CYBER FSYCHOS A.O.D., more. He is a resident of Leesburg, Virginia, and very much enjoys his BAD reputation.

Doug Coulson is a 23-year-old college student who was a drummer in a blues/rock band, then began taking a serious interest in education and writing/publishing. He has completed an undergraduate Pre-professional English degree at Oklahoma City University, and plans to enter graduate studies in Creative Writing. He is former editor of the late THE BARRELHOUSE, a semi-eclectic magazine of H/F/SF. He resides in Edmond, Oklahoma.

L. Winter Damon, of Tucson, Arizona, has had poetry and artwork in previous issues of DHATHREAUM. He has most recently illustrated George Harch's SINISTRE anthology. His fiction, art and poetry abounds in both the small and propresses. Damond Rex Miller interview in this issue is a portion of an in-depth profile appearing in Tal Publication's trade paperback edition REX MILIJER: THE COMPLETE REVIEW_AITONS.

Sean Doolittle lives in Roca, Nebraska. <u>David</u> is his first appearance in DEATHREALM, though his short stories may be found in numerous small press magazines, such as THIN ICE, MIDNIGHT ZOO, ELDRITCH TALES, more.

Barl Douchette is the nom-de-plume of Greensboro author Bizabeth McDavid She is primarily a children's write, with sales to such prestigious markets as HGILLGHTS FOR CHILDREN, POCKETS, CRICKUT and HUMPITY DUMPITY. For this issue's Gleaving, Ms. McDavid enlisted the creative assistance of Rhonda Cranford, also of Greensboro. Neither of them plan to submit Gleaving to the aforementioned children's markets, under the assumption that it might somehow transish their reputations.

Harry Fass of Oak Park, Illinois (a Chicago suburb), another embattled DEATHREALM veteran, qualifies for sainthood after helping to save Mr and Mrs. Deathrealm from the jam he got them into during the 1993 Chicago 4th of July celebration. Look for another of Harry's monstrous creations on the cover of DEATHREALM #20.

Chris Friend of West Union, West Virginia is becoming more and more visible among small press publications. DEATHREALM has played host to his horrible face(s) several times in the past, and you may look forward to seeing more such terrifying visages next time....

Charles S. Hill, another native of Martinsville, Virginia, is primarily an oil painter, specializing in landscapes. He occasionally ventures into the darker areas of the land, and has found his way into DEATHREALM a couple of times previously. His work has also been seen on the cover of THE TOME.

Allea Koczowski hardly requires an introduction. Without question, horrors' preminer illustrator, Mr. Koczowski grussome artwork has appeared in virtually every conceivable horror market over the last decade, from the biggest pro publications to the smallest of the small press. Without him, Upper Darby, Pennsylvania would probably be an ordinary Mid-Atlantic town.

Michael Kucharski comes from Wyandotte, Michigan, not Garner, North Carolina, as was erroneously stated last issue. Mr. Kucharski, a professional

commercial artist and illustrator, frequently contributes to DEATHREALM's pages. His work has also appeared recently in CEMETERY DANCE.

Edward Lee is author of numerous horror novels, including INCUBI, SUCCUBI, and GHOULS, the later two having been optioned for film by O'Gore/Sierra, Inc., and screenplays are currently being considered by Planet Productions Corporation of Hollywood.

D. F. Lewis is DEATHREALM's featured columnist "across the Atlantic." Next issue will feature a profile of his horrific career, complete with photographs. His writing credits are varied and impressive, on both sides of the ocean, with some 300 published works to his name.

Rex Miller makes his second DEATHREALM appearance with X; in last issue, we published Burn, which he co-wrote with Jessica Horsting. For a comprehensive list of Mr. Miller's achievements, see the interview in these pages conducted by t. winter-damon.

Keith Minnion, of Philadelphia, has sold short liction to ASIMOVS, MZPS FANTASY MAGAZINE and DRAGON, and has an SF novel currently making the publisher rounds. For the last year he has begun selling hortor illustrations to such markets as DEATHREALM, CEMETERY DANCE, WERD TALES and BIZARRE BAZAAR.

Stacy Packard of Seattle recently sold poetry to The West Seattle Herald; Barnabas, in this issue, is dedicated to a familiar character from a very familiar TV series that was covered in DPATHREALM #16. Stacy is now actively seeking markets for her dark poets.

Phillip Reynolds, whose beautiful cover art appears this issue, has often contributed to DEATHREAUM and is making a name for himself in the horror field with his wonderfully dark and frightening compositions. His art has also appeared recently on the ecover of ZAM Magazine, as well as editor Raineys collection of short stories entitled FUGUE DEVIL & OTHER WHERD HORRORS, due out early next from Meadre, line.

Robert Rhine, of Hollywood, Californie, is the award-winning producer/direct/writer and star of the cult commod pein, Road Lawerts and Other Briefs (released by AIR, 1969) and winner of the New York, Chicago, Houston and Australian International Film Pestivals. He is currently seeking financing for several feature projects and is trying to raise the funds by selling short stories. He key are about 3,186,472 stories to raise.

James Robert Smith has joined DEATHRPALM's ranks as associate fiction editor. Mr. Smith's short fiction may also be found in such markets WHEN 'THE BLACK LOTUS BLOOMS, TALES OF LOVECRAFTIAN HORROR, more. His comic scripts have been graphically illustrated in TABOO, HEILARISER, and many other pro comic markets.

Timothy Standish has become one of the most recognized artists in the horror/dark fantasy genre, and with good reason. His work frequently appears in many Tal Publications, and has graced DEATHREALMs pages on many occasions. Mr. Standish lives in Binghamton, New York.

Jeffrey Thomas of Westborough, Massachusetts, has appeared in DIATHERAUM previously—a little horror story centitled Foreign Bodies, which went on to be published in Deadline Press' QUICK CHILLS II, THE BEST OF THE SMALL PRESS. Mr. Thomas' short faction frequently appears in such markets as STRANGE DAYS, HAUNTS, BLEGIA, STARRY NIGHTS, others. He has recently begun publishing his own magazine, entitled THE END. In addition to his writing and editing careers, he is a very capable arist and pool.

Scott Thomas also halls from Westborough, Missachusetts, and somehoms has found himself to be the brother of the aforencinioned Thomas from the same town. His short fiction has appeared in STARRY NIGHTS, VANDELOECHT'S FICTION MAGAZINE, THE NEW BART, VANDELOECHT'S FICTION MAGAZINE, THE NEW BART, VANDELOECHT'S FICTION MAGAZINE, THE WORLDS, and be the radio program BETWFEIN THE WORLDS, and he was "featured port in WITNESS TO THE BIZARRE."

Karl Edward Wagner is DEATHREALM's regular bizarre columnist, the award-winning author of many novels and short stories. His tenure as editor of DeW's YEARS BIST'HORDOR series has 'been honorable indeed. Mr Wagner is no doubt Chapel Hill, North Carolini's most frightening resident psychiatrist.

Augic Weidemann, Kingston, New York, has contributed many an illustration to DEATHREALM, including last issue's striking cover. His work has appeared in GRUE, 2AM, QUICK. CHILLS II, ELDRITCH TALES, innumerable others.

